This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Harvard Depository
Brittle Book

Digitized by Google

Se
(Meth.)
1860

943 Meth.
Tofft

Theological School
IN CAMBRIDGE.

Received Nov 23, 1860

Digitized by Google

1.25

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

METHODISM SUCCESSFUL,

AND THE

INTERNAL CAUSES OF ITS SUCCESS.

BY REV. B. F. TEFFT, D.D., LL.D.,

LATE PRESIDENT OF GENESEE COLLEGE,

AUTHOR OF "HUNGARY AND KOSSUTH," "WEBSTER AND HIS MASTERPIECES," ETC., ETC.

WITH A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

BY BISHOP JANES.

DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK:
DERBY & JACKSON, 498 BROADWAY.
1860.

Digitized by Google

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1850, by

DERBY & JACKSON,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

W. H. Tinson, Stereotyper.

Geo. Russell & Co., Printers.

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

It will be remembered by many of my readers, that Daniel Webster, in his speech of the 7th of March, 1850, when discussing matters vital to the continued existence of the government, expressed his sorrow for the recent division of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, into its Northern and Southern branches, because he regarded the unity of that denomination, not only as "one of the great props of religion and morals, throughout the whole country, from Maine to Georgia," but as almost essential to the unity and integrity of the nation. Similar regrets have been uttered by men of the highest position for their intelligence and talents, by citizens, statesmen and divines of the greatest eminence, in every section of the country. It is but a few days ago, indeed, that the present Chief Magistrate of the United States, while addressing his countrymen on subjects fundamental to the continuance and prosperity of the Republic, with the responsibilities and solemnities of his high office on him, referring to the causes of dissension and weakness at work among the people, mentioned the division of American Methodism as a calamity to our national existence: "The numerous, powerful, pious and respectable Methodist Episco-

Digitized by Google

pal Church has been thus divided; and the division was a severe shock to the Union."

Such statements, emanating in the one case from the best intellect, and in the other from the highest position among the people of this country, and in both cases from citizens of ripe age and extensive experience and observation, are enough to demonstrate the fact, that Methodism has at last become a power of no secondary importance on this continent; and yet it is a question among Methodists themselves, who ought to know their own affairs, whether their denomination is not still higher, stronger, more influential and powerful in Europe than in the United States. One thing is certainly clear, that Methodism, which began in obscurity and feebleness, has achieved for itself everywhere a most wonderful success. This point is generally conceded; but there are few persons, nevertheless, on either side of the Atlantic, outside of the pale of Methodism, who have taken the pains to learn the exact character and extent of this success; and there are fewer persons still, I think, either outside or within the denomination, who have so examined or studied its origin and progress, as to be able to state, with philosophical correctness, the organic causes to which its remarkable prosperity and growth are to be attributed.

The following pages were written for the twofold purpose of stating the fact, and the philosophy of the fact, of this unparalleled development of the Wesleyan Reformation; and the author has aspired to such a style of treatment as to call the attention of the thinking portion of the American population to this subject. If such men as Webster and the President of the republic, when surveying the affairs of the nation of greatest magnitude, feel called upon to place

Digitized by Google

Methodism at the head of the religious and social influences of this continent; if, on the other hand, Methodism is known to be at least equally important in the leading empire of the eastern hemisphere; and if, as is frankly confessed, it took its origin as a repudiated and rejected movement, mourned over by the good, scorned by the bad, and ridiculed, despised, misrepresented and turned out of doors by the ruling classes of Europe and America alike, there is a topic of study in its success, a problem in its present rank and power, which no philosopher, no thinking man, of any nation of the world, can longer afford to overlook.

There is a demand, as I think, and a demand peculiarly imperative at the present crisis of the world's affairs, for a fundamental examination of the causes of the success of Methodism; the history of the movement is very generally known; but thoughtful men cannot rest their curiosity upon the mere facts of the case; they wish to comprehend the force or forces that have propelled and developed the Wesleyan revival, till it has become what it now is in every quarter of the world; and though they desire the truth, and nothing but the truth, they must be ready to acknowledge that the whole truth could scarcely be presented by any writer, however able and impartial, whose knowledge of the system is only such as is possible to those who study it from without. If it is only the spirit of a man that can tell what there is in a man, as we are told by revelation, it is equally clear, that no one but a living person existing within a great social organism can declare, correctly and completely, what that organism is, or may contain. The work produced by such a person would be, I know, egotistic; it could not be otherwise than egotistic; but the egotism would be that of an autobiography,

Digitized by Google

which, when limited carefully by self-respect and truth, constitutes the principal value and leading charm of this class of works.

It was by no cherished prepossession of any personal ability to perform such a service, or to meet this general demand, that I was prompted to the composition and publication of this work. It was by accident alone that I came to take up my pen at all upon the subject. In the year 1858, I was appointed a delegate of an annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States to a General Conference of Congregationalists in one of the New England States. The duties of this office required me, if able, to attend the said General Conference, and to bear to it the fraternal regards and Christian salutations of the body whom I was appointed to represent, as well as to give some general account of the condition of Methodism, either within the limits of my conference, or as a whole, according to the amount of time that might be given for the purpose. Circumstances beyond my control rendered my attendance at the Congregational Conference impossible; and I was therefore requested, by one of its leading and most respected members, to communicate what I had to say in writing. "Write us," said the reverend gentleman, "a good, long communication, and let us know exactly what Methodism is doing in the world."

Though I could not but see that this was a very liberal commission, and one requiring a great deal of labor, I nevertheless sat down and wrote quite a lengthy and elaborate article on the general topic thus imposed upon me. But it was not finished in time for the occasion that had called it into being. The next year, I received the appointment as

Digitized by Google

delegate to the same body the second time; but I was again unable to leave home; and so, having before written a little treatise, I now conceived the idea, from the very inadequacy of so brief a composition to do justice to so large a plan, and from the deep interest that had grown up within me in the enterprise so undesignedly undertaken, of taking up the general subject and treating it at a length in some degree commensurate with its magnitude and importance.

Such is the accidental origin and history of this work; and the reader of these pages is therefore to listen to what he reads, not as to something drawn up by a professional book-maker, who had no object in view beyond the making of a book, but as to the words of one called upon to utter, in the presence of a sister denomination, and before a promiscuous assemblage of intelligent citizens, what he could say from his own knowledge and experience of what the world calls Methodism. That assembly may be expanded, if the reader pleases, into an audience as wide as the nation, and as numerous as the reading population of the country, and yet these pages are but the language of a person, who, with the usual license of such an office, is simply relating what he has learned by personal experience and observation of a religious movement, whose success contains a problem of which every intelligent citizen must desire to obtain a philosophical solution.

The reader will see, at the first glance, that I have dealt largely in the names of the living and the dead, who, either as preachers, teachers, or writers, have made themselves a reputation in the annals of the denomination. It may be imagined, indeed, that I have labored to make some display of the illustrious ornaments of Methodism. This, however,

Digitized by Google

is not the truth; and, in looking over what is here to be given to the public, I regret that my limits have compelled me to omit many names, English and American, as worthy of a record as any I have included. American Methodism, in particular, is rich with characters, whose names have not been so much as alluded to in this production. When it is considered that, among the pulpit orators of Methodism, no mention has been made of such men as Cummings, and Raymond, and Livesey, and Barrows, and Webber, and Curtis, and Cox, and Taylor, and Miley, and Corbitt, and Castle, and Bristol, and Goodwin, and Bingham, and Trimble, and Robinson, and Hargrave, and Haney, and Eddy, and Hamline, and Sewell, and Morgan, and Slicer, and Hamilton, and Keener, who have few or no competitors in the sections to which they have devoted their labors, it must be apparent that no effort has been made at ostentation. Then, of the authors of the denomination, there is a score of such names as those of Liscomb, and Thomas, and Luckey, and Gorrie, and Spicer, and Lorraine, and Brooks, and Loomis, and Harris, and Williams, and Thayer, and Warren, and Kent, and Mudge whose productions could not be omitted from a full list of the more able and successful writers; the writings of Liscomb and of Harris, in particular, are to be ranked among the most marked and able of the denomination; and in this way, the catalogue would extend to a length beyond the limits of a chapter, had it not been the idea of this work to give classes and specimens of the distinguished men of Methodism, rather than a complete account. But I cannot omit the names of those men, who, like Thomas Carlton, Leroy Swormstedt, Adam Poe, William M. Doughty and James P. Magee, have done marvels of good in manag-

Digitized by Google

ing the publishing interests of the denomination, and in the diffusion of its literature over the breadth of the continent. The present generation owes them a debt which several generations to come will not be entirely able to discharge.

It may be thought, on the other hand, that the positions and productions of so many living men could scarcely be represented by a cotemporary without some show of the personal likes and dislikes so common to mankind. This, certainly, is a very natural presumption; but I think those taking up the volume with this apprehension will meet with an agreeable disappointment. The work has been written to punish no enemies, to laud no friends, but to speak for a noble cause, and to utter the simple truth. No man's reputation has been taken upon rumor; for rumor is apt to be, as I *know* and *feel*, cruel and unjust; nor have I, in any instance, judged of a person's production by my opinions of the man. I have everywhere separated the man from his works, and then both from all relations to myself, that I might render a verdict which the severest historic candor must ever afterward approve. I shall consider myself well treated if my readers will follow the same rule in judging of what I have herein performed.

Though the very groundwork of this volume required me to speak of other denominations, and to compare them in some respects with my own, I cherish nothing but the most kindly feeling for their welfare and the sincerest interest in their success. I feel, indeed, that I have arrived at that period of life, when a person of any magnanimity or foresight can see little or no cause for maintaining other than the most cordial relations, with societies of men, or with any member of the great family of man. Not a line has been

Digitized by Google

prompted, therefore, by a sentiment of ill-will. The final triumph of our common Christianity is the object lying nearest of all things to the center of my heart. To God and humanity have I renewedly consecrated what remains to me of mortal life; and though I am conscious, in no word I have written, in no transaction of any kind, of having the smallest intention to wrong or injure a human being, my future, I am resolved, shall proceed more exclusively than ever from that principle which I have made the center and substance of the system set forth in this production—the principle of eternal benevolence, the *religion* of UNIVERSAL LOVE.

With these sentiments, and with a heart throbbing to make the days yet before me tell as much as possible for the spread of this heart-felt religion, and the progress of the race, I send this production on its errand of good, hoping that it may be yet doing something for mankind after its author has gone to his repose among the silent dead.

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

BY BISHOP JANES.

New York, *June* 20, 1860.

Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D., LL.D.

Dear Sir: I have just seen and read a prospectus of your forthcoming work, entitled, "Methodism Successful, and the Internal Causes of its Success."

Judging from its outline, plan, and table of contents, it cannot fail to be a useful and interesting work.

The success of any Christian agency, even though feeble and limited, is inconceivably important. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth." "He which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The salvation of one soul is a more glorious success than gaining the whole world. The restoration of one fallen, but redeemed, rational, and immortal spirit, to goodness and to God, is of eternal importance. Any instrumentality that effects this result is of incalculable value and inexpressible interest.

If, as we believe, Methodistic Christianity has multiplied such results by hundreds of thousands, yea, millions, how vast the scale of its influence, and how immense the beatitude it has conferred.

A clear representation of its wonderful success would enable the Christian public to appreciate more properly its religious usefulness, and to sustain more earnestly its future operations. It must also be felt by all catholic and devout Christians to be cause of thanksgiving and praise, that God has been pleased to raise up and prosper this branch of his general church, which is doing so considerable a part in the evangelization of the world.

Your second topic—"The Internal Causes of its Success"—is perhaps of even greater practical importance. As a church, in all our religious prosperity, we have uniformly said, "The excellency of the

Digitized by Google

power is of God, and not of man." Yet we know that God employs agencies in carrying out the purposes of his love to our race. It is, therefore, exceedingly desirable to know what agencies have His more especial sanction, and are thereby rendered eminently successful. As Methodistic Christianity has been eminently, if not pre-eminently successful, (in modern times,) in its workings, and as its achievements are among the most signal and blessed the Church has witnessed during the past hundred years, if we can ascertain the causes of this efficiency and prosperity, we shall confer upon all the propagandists of Christianity a great favor, by showing them the means and measures by which they may expect success in this work of God. From the plan of your work submitted to me, and from my knowledge of your ability to investigate the subject philosophically and spiritually, and to present the results of your examination intelligently and attractively, I believe your book will be one of much interest and usefulness. This must be true, if, as I anticipate, it leads all Christians to renounce dependence on imposing forms and ceremonies, and on magnificent temples and human displays, and whilst intently plying their simple, well-directed instrumentalities, to feel and say, "Not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord;" and both in life and death declare with Mr. Wesley, "The best of it is, God is with us."

Yours, fraternally in Christ,

E. S. JANES.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE FIRST METHODIST,	26–44
The Fire at Epworth,	26
Rescue of John Wesley,	28
Scrap from the Latin Testament,	29
Character of Little John,	29
A Pupil to his Mother,	30
A Student of the Charter House,	30
A Student at Oxford,	31
Correspondence with his Mother,	32
His Mother's Influence,	32
His Little Club at Oxford.	33
First Members of his Club,	34
He becomes a Fellow of Oxford,	34
Influence of his Mother,	34
Call to go to Georgia,	35
Crosses the Ocean,	36
Conversations with Moravians,	36
Returns to England,	36
Goes to Germany,	37
Conversations with Zinzendorf,	37
Settlement of his Course of Life,	37
His great Humility,	37
Character of his Preaching,	38
His Future shaped by Providence,	38
Examination of his Conversion,	38
His Conversation Fundamental,	38
A Key to his Character and Life,	39
Influence of the Fire at Epworth,	40
How he became what he was,	40
He the Founder of Methodism,	41
Mrs. Wesley and Methodism,	41
Charles Wesley and Methodism,	41
Whitefield and Methodism,	42
Wesley Rejected by the Church,	42
Turned Out of all the Pulpits,	42
Disheartening Prospect,	44
One ray of Hope from the Promises of Scripture,	44

CHAPTER II.

NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF METHODISM,	45–75
The Rejection of Jesus the means of Spreading His Religion,	45
Rejection of Luther favorable to the Spread of the Reformation,	45
Rejection of Wesley Advances the Growth of Methodism,	45
The Argument of Success,	47
Pompey and Cæsar,	47
Francis Bacon and Mrs. Stowe,	47
Mohammedanism and Methodism,	48
Era of Methodism,	48
I. English Methodism.	49–50
1. British Wesleyan Conference,	49
2. Eastern Brit. Am. Conference,	49
3. Canad. Wesleyan Conference,	50
4. Australian Conference,	50
5. French Conference,	50
6. Cluster of Smaller Bodies,	50
II. American Methodism,	50–51
1. Methodist Episcopal Church,	50
2. Methodist Episcopal Church, South,	50
3. Wesleyan Method. of U. S.,	50
4. Canada Methodist Episcopal Church,	51
5. Protestant Methodist Church of United States,	51
III. Missionary Methodism,	51–52
1. Home Dep't ment of Brit. Meth.	51
2. Foreign Department of British Meth.,	51
3. Missionary Department of Methodist Episcopal Church,	52
4. Missions of Methodist Episcopal Church, South.	52
5. Missions of Smaller Societies,	53
General Aggregate of Methodism,	54
A Grand Array of Numbers,	54
Methodism and the Primitive Church,	55
Methodism and the Church of England,	56
Methodism in the United States,	58
Methodism and the Protestant Episcopal Church,	59
Methodism and Congregationalism,	59
Decline of Congregationalism,	60
Slow Growth of Episcopalianism,	61
Success not an Argument,	61
Small Beginning of Methodism,	62
Remark of Dr. Channing,	62
Methodism hard at Work,	63
Literary Character of Methodism,	64
What Methodism proposes to Do,	66
Methodism and Education,	67

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
Schools of British Methodism,	67
Schools of American Methodism,	68
Character of Methodist Schools,	69
Courses of Study in them,	70
Ministerial Education,	70
Methodist Biblical Schools,	71
Education of Early Methodists,	71
Law Schools of Methodism,	72
Medical Schools of Methodism,	72
Publishing Houses of English Methodism,	73
System of Cheap Publications, Methodistic,	73
Publishing Houses of American Methodism,	74
Periodicals of American Methodism,	74
Literature of American Methodism,	75
Concessions of other Denominations,	75
So much in so Youthful a Denomination,	75

CHAPTER III.

	PAGE
RANK AND POWER OF ENGLISH METHODISM,	76–147
Recovery of Rank in England,	76
How Persecuted at First,	76
Progress,	76
Notoriety given it by Opposition,	77
Wesley confessed to be a Remarkable-Man,	77
Methodism still Progressing,	77
Most Learned Man of England a Methodist,	77
Religious Rank and Power,	78
English Methodism very Literary,	79
Samuel Wesley and the Athenian Mercury,	79
Samuel Wesley and Pope, Richardson, Tate, and Swift,	79
Works of Samuel Wesley,	79
Samuel Wesley and his Poetry,	80
Susannah Wesley,	80
Her Intellectual Character,	80
Her great Attainments,	80
Her Writings and Influence,	81
Samuel Wesley, Junior,	81
His Brothers and Sisters,	82
His great Abilities,	82
His genius as a Poet,	83
His Associations with the Learned,	83
Emilia Wesley,	83
Her Mother's Care of Her,	83
Her remarkable Memory,	84
Her general Character,	84
An Artistic Reader of Milton,	84
Her Portrait by her Sister,	85
Susannah Wesley, Junior,	86
Her Unhappy Marriage,	86
Her Mental Character,	87
Hilarity of her Disposition,	87
General Estimate of Her,	87
Mary Wesley,	88
Her great Beauty,	88
She Died in early Womanhood,	88
What her Sister says of Her,	89
Mehetable Wesley,	89
Her great Precocity,	89
Her Beauty of Person,	90
Wit, Humor, Mirthfulness,	90
Poetical Portrait of Her,	90
Her Poetic Genius,	91
Her Poetical Works,	92
Quotation from her Poetry,	93
Anne Wesley,	94
Her brother Samuel's Epithalamium,	94
Her Marriage,	94
Her manner of Life,	94
Not spurred to Labor by Necessity,	95
Compared, in this Respect, with Kindred Spirits,	95
Compared with Shakspeare, Milton, Addison, Smollett, Goldsmith, Cowley, Collins, Johnson, Dryden, Lightfoot, and Chatterton,	95
Her Service to the Literature of Methodism,	97
Martha Wesley,	97
Dr. Clarke's Opinion of Her,	98
She was the Associate of Dr. Johnson,	98
Her Conversations with Johnson,	99
The friend of Garrick, Burke, etc.,	100
The greatness of her Genius,	101
Kezziah Wesley,	101
Her Talents very marked,	101
She Dies Young,	102
Sarah Wesley,	102
Charles Wesley, Junior,	102
Charles a Musical Prodigy,	103
Surpassed by his brother Samuel,	103
Samuel a Poet at eight years of age,	103
A Specimen of his Powers,	104
Samuel compared with Pope and Milton as a Boy-Poet,	105
General Review of these less noted members of the Wesley Family,	105
Charles Wesley, the Poet,	106
His Style as a Prose Writer,	106
His rank as a Lyric Poet,	106
Compared with Dr. Watts,	106
Portraiture of Watts as a Poet,	107
Watts, Stennett, Steele, Addison, and Opie, as a School of Lyric Poets,	108
Cowper as a Lyric Poet,	109
Milton's Lyrical Genius,	110
Defence of Milton, Cowper, etc.,	111
It will not apply to Watts,	111
Charles Wesley's Lyrics,	111
Free from the Faults of Watts,	112
Watts' Appreciation of Charles Wesley,	112
John Wesley's estimate of Charles,	113
Comparison of Watts and Wesley,	114
Watts' Masterpiece,	114
Criticism on it,	114
Watts describes too much,	114
Wesley does not describe,	115

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
Comparative Specimen from Wesley,	116
Watts and Wesley contrasted as to several other points,	117
Distinguishing peculiarity of Wesley,	118
Wesley, like Shakspeare, *enacts* his parts, not *describes* them,	118
Wesley presented under a great variety of aspects as a Lyric Poet,	120
Wesley compared with David,	121
Wesley's position as the Poet of Methodism,	122
Final Comparison of Watts and Wesley,	124
John Wesley,	125
John Wesley as a Poet,	125
His Corrections of Dr. Watts,	125
John Wesley as a Translator.	125
Dr. Milner's Concession,	126
Specimens of Wesley's Improvements upon Watts,	126
John Wesley as a Scholar,	128
His Services to English Literature,	128
He introduces it to the Fountains in the German Language,	129
Anticipates Carlyle, etc., in this,	129
John Wesley as an Author,	130
Extent of his Labors,	131
Popularity of his Productions,	131
More Read than any English Author,	132
More Read than any of the Classics,	133
John Fletcher,	133
His Character, by Dr. Southey,	134
His Talents as a Writer,	134
What he did for Methodism,	135
Isaac Taylor's Opinion of Him,	135
Thomas Coke, LL.D.,	136
An Apostolic Man,	136
His eminence as a Literary Man,	136
His Writings,	136
His Labors in behalf of Methodism,	136
The first Lay Preachers,	137
Dr. Southey's Opinion of them,	137
Their strong Sense and Education,	137
The great Learning of some of them,	137
Scholarship of Thomas Walsh,	137
Wesley's estimate of his Abilities,	137
Dr. Adam Clarke,	139
His wonderful Learning,	139
His numerous Literary Works,	139
And yet always an Itinerant,	139
Richard Watson,	139
His breadth of Intellect,	139
His Theological Productions,	139
Joseph Benson,	140
His Abilities as a Preacher,	140
His Commentary and other Works,	140
More recent Magnates of English Methodism,	140
Rev. William Arthur, D.D.,	140
Rev. John Beecham, D.D.,	140
Rev. Jabez Bunting, D.D.,	141
Rev. George Cubitt,	141
Rev. James Dixon, D.D.,	141
Rev. Dr. Etheridge and his Works,	141
Rev. Thomas Jackson, D.D., and his Works,	141
Rev. F. A. West, D.D., and his Writings,	142
Rev. F. J. Jobson, D.D., and his Works,	142
Rev. G. Turner and his Works,	142
Rev. A. Scott and his Works,	142
Rev. Robert Young and his Works,	142
Rev. J. H. Rigg and his Works,	142
A large class of English Methodist Authors,	142
Rev. W. H. Rule, D.D., and his Works,	143
Rev. G. Smith and his Works,	143
Orators of English Methodism,	144
George Whitefield as an Orator,	145
Dr. Franklin's Opinion of him,	145
John Wesley as a Preacher,	145
Thomas Walsh as a Preacher,	145
Joseph Benson as a Preacher,	145
Richard Watson in the Pulpit,	145
Dr. Bunting and his Eloquence,	145
Dr. Newton and his Eloquence,	145
Dr. Dixon and his Eloquence,	146
Dr. Arthur as an Orator,	146
Rev. W. M. Punshon the Prince of living English Pulpit Orators,	146
Compared with Spurgeon,	146
Punshon and P. T. Barnum,	147
General Review of the Rank and Power of English Methodism,	147

CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
RANK AND POWER OF AMERICAN METHODISM,	148-200
First planting of Methodism in America,	148
The work begun by Wesley and Whitefield,	148
Influence of the Revolutionary War,	148
Labors and Success of Coke and Asbury,	148
Wonderful Growth of Methodism,	149
Character of its Early Preachers,	150
What Judge M'Lean says of them,	150
He puts Bishop M'Kendree at the head of American Pulpit Orators,	151
Rev. Jesse Lee,	152
Rev. Freeborn Garretson,	152
Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D.,	152
Influence of Methodism upon Eloquence,	152
Produced a new School of Oratory,	152
Rev. John Summerfield, M.A.,	153
Rev. John N. Maffitt,	153
Rev. Willbur Fisk, D.D.,	153
Rev. George Cookman,	153
Rev. H. B. Bascom, D.D., LL.D.,	153
These compared with H. W. Beecher	153

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
Popularity of Bascom,	154
Popularity of Maffitt,	154
Living Pulpit Orators of American Methodism,	155
A Methodist Platform of Orators,	156
Rev. Thomas H. Stockton, D.D.,	156
Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D. LL.D.,	156
Rev. Edward Thomson, D.D. LL.D.,	156
Rev. Geo. F. Pierce, D.D.,	156
Rev. W. A. Smith, D.D.,	156
Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D.,	156
Rev. Edward Sehon, D.D.,	156
Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D.,	156
Rev. W. H. Milburn, A.M.,	156
Rev. Jesse T. Peck, D.D.,	156
Rev. R. S. Foster, D.D.,	156
Rev. J. P. Durbin, D.D.	156
Oratory of the Bench of Bishops of the M. E. Church,	156
Oratory of the Bench of Bishops of the M. E. Church, South,	159
Literature of American Methodism,	161
Its first Efforts,	161
Coke and Asbury as Authors,	162
Rev. Jesse Lee as an Author,	162
Rev. Valentine Cook as a Scholar,	162
Rev. Mr. Beauchamp as a Thinker and Writer,	162
A Literary Prodigy,	162
Another Literary Prodigy,	164
Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D. LL.D. as a Scholar and Author,	165
His leading Works,	166
Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D. LL.D., as the leading Metaphysician of American Methodism,	167
His great Abilities and Learning,	167
His great Literary Projects,	168
Those classed with him,	169
Rev. T. Merritt,	169
Rev. J. P. Durbin, D.D.,	169
Rev. Israel Chamberlayne, D.D.,	169
Rev. John Dempster, D.D.,	169
Rev. H. M. Johnson, D.D.,	169
Rev. C. K. True, D.D.,	169
Rev. Ignatius A. Few, LL.D.,	169
Rev. Augustus B. Longstreet, LL.D.	169
Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D. LL.D., and his School of Classical Scholars,	170
Rev. G. R. Crooks, D.D.,	170
Rev. S. M. Vail, D.D.,	170
Rev. Isaiah McMahon, A.M.,	170
Rev. N. C. Brooks, A.M.,	171
Great number of Classical Scholars,	171
Augustus W. Smith, LL.D., and his School of Mathematical and Scientific Writers,	172
John Johnston, LL.D.,	172
Rev. Geo. C. Whitlock, LL.D.,	172
Rev. H. Mattison, A.M.,	173
Professor S. L. Loomis, A.M. and M.D.,	173
Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D., as a Mathematician,	173
Rev. J. P. Durbin, D.D., as an Editor of Scientific Works,	173
Remarkable familiarity of Methodist Ministers with the Bible,	173
Rev. Isaac Puffer a Prodigy,	174
Rev. F. G. Hibbard, D.D., and Works,	175
James Strong, S.T.D., and Works,	175
Rev. A. M. Osbon, D.D., as a Writer,	175
Rev. Geo. Coles and his Concordance,	175
Rev. Peter Akers, D.D., and his Chronology,	175
Theological Writers of Methodism,	176
Rev. Adam Clarke, LL.D., etc.,	176
Rev. Joseph Benson,	176
Rev. Richard Watson,	176
Rev. Dr. Ralston,	177
Rev. Asbury Lowrey, A.M.,	177
Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D.,	177
Rev. T. Merritt,	177
Rev. Willbur Fisk, D.D.,	177
Rev. R. S. Foster, D.D.,	177
Rev. Geo. Peck, D.D.,	177
Rev. J. T. Peck, D.D.,	177
Mrs. Phebe Palmer,	177
Rev. Thos. A. Morris, D.D.,	177
Rev. H. B. Bascom, D.D. LL.D.,	177
Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D. LL.D.,	177
Rev. William Nast, D.D.,	177
Historians and Biographers,	178
Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.,	179
Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D.,	179
Rev. J. F. Wright, D.D.,	179
Hon. John M'Lean, LL.D.,	179
Rev. James Porter, D.D.,	179
Rev. Dr. M'Clintock,	179
Rev. Dr. Olin,	179
Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D.,	179
His History of Methodism,	179
Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D.,	179
His History of Methodism,	179
Rev. Calvin Ruter, D.D.,	179
Rev. G. F. Cox, A.M.,	179
Rev. Bishop Emory,	179
Rev. Robert Emory, D.D.,	180
Rev. L. M. Lee, D.D.,	180
Rev. W. H. Milburn,	180
Rev. Daniel Curry, D.D.,	181
Rev. J. Holdich, D.D.,	181
Rev. C. F. Deems, D.D.,	181
Rev. J. B. Finley, D.D.,	181
Rev. C. Adams, D.D.,	181
S. S. Literature of American Methodism,	181
Rev. D. P. Kidder, D.D., and his Services,	182
Rev. Daniel Wise, D.D., and his Services,	182
Rev. William Hosmer,	182
Rev. Geo. Peck, D.D.,	182
Rev. J. T. Peck, D.D.	182
Rev. E. O. Haven, D.D.,	182
Dr. Wise the Peter Parley of Methodism,	182
The Belles-Lettres Writers of American Methodism,	182
Methodism not unfavorable to fine writing,	182
Remarks upon Whittier and Milton,	182
Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D.,	184
Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D.,	184

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
Rev. D. D. Whedon, D.D.,	184
Rev. W. H. Allen, LL.D.,	184
Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D.,	184
Rev. E. Wentworth, D.D.,	184
Hon. W. C. Larrabee, LL.D.,	184
Rev. E. Thomson, D.D. LL.D.,	185
William C. Brown, Esq.,	185
Mary Maxwell as a Poetess,	186
Rev. J. D. Bell, A.M., as a fine Writer,	186
Mrs. H. C. Gardiner,	186
Rev. Mark Trafton, A.M.,	186
Rev. James Floy, D.D.,	187
Rev. L. L. Hamline, D.D.,	187
Miscellaneous Writers of American Methodism,	188
Rev. James Floy, D.D.,	188
Rev. Daniel Curry, D.D.,	188
Rev. Calvin Kingsley, D.D.,	188
Rev Charles Collins, D.D.,	188
Rev. William Hunter, D.D.,	188
Rev. J. V. Watson, D.D.,	188
Rev. M. P. Gaddis, A.M.,	188
Rev. Joseph M'D. Mathews, D.D.,	188
G. P. Disosway, A.M.,	188
Mrs. C. M. Edwards,	188
Rev. L. D. Davis,	188
Rev. S. R. Coggeshall, D.D.,	188
Rev. R. W. Allen, A.M.,	188
Rev. J. S. Inskip,	188
Rev. John Miley, D.D.,	188
Rev. Robert Allyn, A.M.,	189
Rev. O. C. Baker, D.D.,	189
Rev. R. S. Janes, D.D.,	189
Rev. M. Simpson, D.D.,	189
Rev. T. F. R. Mercein, A.M.,	189
Rev. T. E. Bond, M.D. and D.D.,	189
Professor M. Caldwell, A.M.,	189
Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D.,	189
Rev. John H. Power, D.D.,	189
Rev. F. Hodgson, D.D.,	189
Rev. D. Smith,	189
Rev. W. Taylor,	190
Rev. C. W. Thomas, A.M.,	190
New York "Evangelist's" encomium on the Literature of Methodism,	190
Dr. Dewey's compliment to Mercein	191
Examples chiefly from Northern Methodism,	192
Zeal of Methodism *increasing*,	193
High Social Position,	194
Three Presidents of the United States its friends,	195
Conversion of President Harrison,	195
Scene in Wesley Chapel, Cincinnati,	196
Hon. Judge M'Lean as a Methodist,	196
Representation of Methodism in Congress,	197
Representation of it in State Governments,	197
Representation of it in Foreign Governments,	197
Distribution of American Methodism,	198
Strength from its peculiar distribution,	199
General summing up,	200
Methodism so Powerful though yet so Young	200

CHAPTER V.

	PAGE
OUTSIDE SOLUTIONS OF THE CHARACTER AND SUCCESS OF METHODISM,	201-293
Methodism a Power in the World,	201
A loftier Stand-point taken,	202
Methodism and Catholicism,	202
A yet broader View of Methodism,	203
The chief Religious Power in the controlling Nations of the Globe,	204
England and the United States the leading Powers of the World's future,	204
Methodism to be the leading Religious Power in both these leading Countries,	205
The mystery of Methodism,	207
The Problem to be solved,	208
Philosophical method of Inquiry to be adopted,	209
I. Unfriendly Outside Opinions and Estimates of Methodism:	
Gossiping Letters of Mrs. Hutton,	210
Their influence upon Samuel Wesley,	212
Samuel's Letters to John Wesley,	212
Prejudices of the Wesley Family,	213
Dr. Priestley's use of this Family Correspondence,	215
Dr. Priestley's Views unfriendly,	215
His influence upon Philosophers,	215
Opposition of Rev. Mr. Toplady,	216
His devotional spirit,	217
His practical Views quite Methodistic,	218
Soured against Wesley by his Calvinism,	218
His Accusations of Methodism,	218
Considers it the work of the Devil,	218
Great bitterness of Diction,	219
His Controversy with Walter Sellon,	220
Exceedingly sarcastic and bitter,	220
How he justifies his Severity,	221
He Reviles Wesley,	222
Calls him a Wolf and Confederate of the Devil,	223
This the Style of all his Writings against Wesley and Methodism,	223
Apology for this Treatment,	224
He considered Methodism an Evil,	225
His fine Spirit in Retirement,	226
Toplady set the opinion of Calvinists in regard to Methodism,	226
Estimate of Methodism till 1807–1810	226
Toplady's Dying Testimony,	226
His first Biographer more mild,	227
His second rebukes him for his Severity,	227
Dr. Pringle speaks quite candidly of Wesley,	228

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
The numerous Slanders against Wesley,	228
First Letter of Sir Richard Hill,	229
Wesley takes no notice of it,	229
Hill's Second Letter,	230
Wesley is still and ever after silent,	235
Many are staggered by his Silence,	236
Probable Reasons why Wesley did not condescend to answer Sir Richard,	235
Opinion of Wesley growing more favorable,	236
Reputation of Methodism at the Epoch 1807–1810,	236
First attack of Sidney Smith in the Edinburgh Review,	237
Severe charges against Methodism,	237
Smith denounces it as Fanaticism,	238
He admits its Wonderful Success,	239
He gives six characteristics of it,	240
He states the causes of its growth,	245
Coarse Vituperation,	246
Voice of the Press generally,	247
Bigotry and Methodism,	248
Dr. Cook's estimate of Methodism,	249
His Objections to the machinery of Methodism,	251
False views of its Origin and History,	251
Substitutes Antinomianism for Methodism,	251
Cook's causes of the increase of Methodism,	252
He thinks it a nuisance to be abated,	253
General Review of the Opponents of Methodism,	254
II. Favorable Judgments of Methodism,	255
The outside Opponents of Methodism balanced by outside Friends, equally eminent and influential,	255
A Reaction in its favor,	256
Origin of this Reaction,	257
Dr. Southey and Methodism,	258
Southey not the man to judge candidly of Methodism,	259
His general Opinion of it quite favorable,	260
His charge of ambition corrected first by Alexander Knox, and afterward by himself,	262
Knox and his Testimony in behalf of Wesley and Methodism,	262
His high eulogy of Wesley,	263
Wesley's last days as beheld by Knox,	266
Knox Answers the charge of Fanaticism,	266
His Opinion of the Character of Methodism,	267
He Sanctions the Doctrines of Methodism,	269
He gives the causes of its Success,	270
Isaac Taylor and Methodism,	270
He wonders at the mistakes of Southey,	270
His glowing eulogy of Wesley,	270
He Refutes the Criticisms of Coleridge,	271
More eulogies on Wesley's Life and Character,	272
His Opinion of the wide influence of Methodism,	272
What it has done for the Church of England,	273
And for other Denominations,	273
His estimate of Methodism,	273
He rejoices in the change of feeling toward Methodism in all Civilized Countries,	275
General Features of Methodism portrayed,	276
The Earnestness of its Faith and Feeling,	276
Sense of God's Presence,	276
Consciousness of Personal Salvation,	277
Oneness of aim and object—the Salvation of Sinners	278
Whitefield the *type* of Methodist Preachers,	278
Methodism mainly indebted to its unity of purpose,	279
Methodism a new epoch in the World's History,	281
The future of Methodism to be still more glorious,	281
The Kirk of Scotland and Methodism,	282
The Opinion of it of Dr. Chalmers,	282
North British Review and Methodism,	282
The London Quarterly Review and Methodism,	283
Plaintive Appeal to Methodism from the Church of England,	284
Knickerbocker Magazine and Methodism,	286
Kirwan and Methodism,	286
New York Examiner and Methodism,	287
Christian Examiner and Methodism,	288
Methodism at last generally appreciated and even eulogized,	291

CHAPTER VI.

METHODISM THE RECOVERED IDEAL OF CHRISTIANITY—THE FIRST CAUSE OF ITS SUCCESS,	293–366
Original condition of Mankind,	295
Love to the Supreme Being universal,	295
This position sustained by analogy,	295
Loss of this love constitutes the fall,	297
Christianity proposes to restore it,	299
This the fundamental idea of Revelation,	300

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
The doctrine of Jesus is only love to God and our fellow-being,	302
Adaptation of this System of Restoration,	304
Social Power of its Central Principle,	306
Doctrine of the Apostles,	308
The Apostolic practice,	309
Argument from St. Paul,	310
Dr. Adam Clark and Dr. Cudworth,	312
The Doctrine of Recovery stated Psychologically,	313
Argument from Personal Consciousness,	315
Relation of the Intellect to the Moral Recovery of Mankind,	316
Moral Conduct not based on Mental Condition or Mental Convictions,	317
Opinions have but little Influence on our Practical Conduct,	317
Singular Illustration of this Fact,	318
Many similar Illustrations,	319
Confessions of Faith of little value,	321
Substance of Christianity,	323
Perversion and Corruption of Christianity,	323
Leaned first toward Judaism,	324
Next toward Paganism,	324
The Philosophising Christian Fathers,	325
Introduction of Platonism,	326
Introduction of Aristotelianism,	327
Consummation of these corruptions the establishment of Popery,	328
Vigorous attempts at Reformation,	329
They continue through many ages,	330
They ultimate in the Lutheran Reformation,	332
Services of Luther to the Christian Ideal,	333
He did not restore it,	334
He is not clear nor consistent,	335
Melancthon did not restore the Ideal,	338
Zuinglius did not restore it,	339
Calvin did not restore it,	340
Controversies between Zuinglius and Luther,	340
Calvin rested the Reformation on the reception of Articles of Faith,	342
He pushed this Principle to great extremes,	343
His Treatment of Servetus,	344
The two grand points of the Reformation,	346
One, the necessity of Regeneration, Good,	346
The other, necessity of Signing a Creed, Bad,	347
Propagation of this erroneous Principle,	347
How the Puritans strove against it in Old England,	347
How they received and enforced it in New England,	349
Advent of Wesley,	350
Condition of Christianity at this Epoch,	350
Wesley's Feelings,	352
His Rejection of the second element of the Lutheran Reformation,	353
He seizes the Doctrine of Regeneration,	353
He Rejects the necessity of Articles of Faith,	354
Extensive Quotations in Proof,	354
His Appeal to the Faculty and Students of Oxford,	355
He Proclaims the Religion of the Heart and Life,	356
He makes it the only thing needful for Church Membership,	357
What this Religion of the Heart is,	357
Its Universal Catholicity,	359
Wesley condemns Opinions as necessary to Christian Fellowship,	360
Great Liberality of Methodism,	362
Glorious Declaration of Mr. Wesley,	363
What value there is in Articles of Faith,	364
Methodism must be grateful to thoughtful people who admire Liberty of Opinion,	365
It is a recovery of the original Ideal of the Christian System,	366

CHAPTER VII.

METHODISM IN RELATION TO THE REPRODUCTION, PRESERVATION, AND PROPAGATION OF THE IDEAL CHRISTIANITY—THE SECOND CAUSE OF ITS SUCCESS,	PAGE 367-484
Unity of Purpose of Original Christianity,	367
Example of Jesus	367
His Statements on the Subject,	368
His one Work a Work of Reconciliation,	368
His Apostles followed his Example,	371
The great success of original Christianity,	373
This Unity of Purpose afterward lost,	373
It was not recovered by the Reformation,	373
Position of John Wesley,	374
Character of his Preaching,	375
This Unity of Object transferred to his Successors,	376
Their consequent Success,	378
But Methodism preserves what it Produces,	378
The Life of a Methodist portrayed,	379
How a Member is elevated to Office,	383
His personal Piety his best Recommendation,	383

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
How he becomes a Minister,	385
Personal Piety still his best Qualification,	385
Questions proposed to Candidates for the Ministry,	385
Methodism but an embodiment of Personal Religion,	386
What is the Office of a Minister?	386
What is the value of Education?	387
What use a Minister is to make of Piety,	389
Singleness of the work of Preaching	390
Double purposes of those having to propagate Religion by debating Creeds,	391
Wesley's view of the Theory of Preaching,	392
1. *He employs only Religious Men to Preach and Propagate Religion*,	393
What such need,	394
How they *might* preach,	395
How they *do* preach,	395
Creeds have no prominence in their Work,	396
Personal Religion the main thing,	397
Views of Methodism respecting the value of Ministerial Education,	397
2. *This Personal Religion the soul and center of the Itinerant System*,	399
How heartfelt Piety prompts to it,	399
Contrast between the work of Preaching by Stationary and by Itinerating Ministers,	399
True work of a Preacher,	401
Converted men feel the spirit of this work,	403
Their great Success Natural,	403
How Personal Piety created the Itinerant System,	404
Difficulties of the Stationary System	406
These Difficulties stated by its Friends,	407
A pitiful Picture of them,	408
The System of Dissenters a relief from the worse practice of the Church of England,	413
Theory of Methodist Evangelization,	414
Founded on Natural Right,	416
Not an Oppression of the People,	416
Identical with the Practice of Jesus and his Apostles,	417
Wonderful Success of the System,	418
3. *Personal Religion the basis of the Methodistic mode of Preaching*,	422
Four modes of Speaking,	422
Heartfelt Piety Naturally Extemporaneous,	423
A Decline of Fervor reduces this Style to the Premeditative,	424
This style portrayed,	426
It was the style of Hortensius and of Cicero,	427
A further Decline of Fervor drops into the mode of Writing and Reciting,	428
Demosthenes an exception,	428
Cicero tried and condemned this Method,	428
His own Statements on the Subject,	429
Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates on Eloquence as an Art,	430
Writing and Reciting almost Universally rejected,	430
Examples of British and American Orators,	431
The lowest Decline of Feeling productive of the Writing and Reading Method,	432
Burke in the British Parliament,	433
Senator Hill in the American Congress,	433
Reading never the mode of any Deliberative Assembly,	433
Reading condemned by the nature of the case,	434
Some Denominations practice Reading,	435
Dr. Wayland's Picture of a Speaking Minister,	436
His Picture of a Reading Minister,	437
Position of Sermon-readers by Dr. Shepard,	438
Dr. Shepard's statement condemned by all the great Orators and Teachers of Elocution,	439
Writing but not Reading advocated by Cicero,	439
The Example of Hortensius,	439
What Aristotle says about Oratory,	441
What Cicero says about it,	442
What Quintilian says about it,	443
Quintilian's Portraiture of Speaking,	444
He condemns the Reading Method,	445
How he sums up the great work of Addressing Public Bodies,	446
Demosthenes not an example in favor of Sermon-reading,	448
Demades, who never wrote, his superior,	449
Demades did not *dare* to write,	450
Robert Hall as a Speaker,	451
George Whitefield as a Speaker,	455
Opinion of Dr. Franklin,	455
Dr. Southey's Description of Whitefield,	455
Rev. Dr. Edwards against Reading,	457
Sir Richard Blackmore against it,	457
Archbishop Leighton against it,	458
These Writers agree with the Greek and Roman Classics,	459
The British Standard against Reading Sermons,	461
Methodism against the practice,	461
Reading strangely maintained,	462
The Bar universally against it,	463
Parliamentary authority against it,	464
Daniel Webster's Example and Success,	466
His great Speech in Reply to Hayne	467
Practice of Jesus and his Apostles opposed to the Reading Method,	470
The Primitive Church against it,	471

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
Wesley and his coadjutors as Speakers,	472
Advantages of the Speaking over the Reading Method,	473
It has contributed largely to the Success of Methodism,	475
4. Personal Religion gave Direction to the Work of Methodism,	477
Isaac Taylor's Observation,	477
Lady Huntington began her work at the summit of Society and failed,	477
Wesley began at its *base* and succeeded,	480

CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
METHODISM THE RECOVERY OF THE IDEAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND WORSHIP,	485–588
The Power of Religion seen in its system of Religious Worship,	485
Story of Fiaminius,	485
Basis of Religious Worship,	486
Origin of Religious Worship,	488
History of it from Abel to Abraham	489
Its History from Abraham to Moses	490
Its History from Moses to Jesus,	490
The two parts of the original Hebrew Worship,	491
The *Typical* Worship closed by the advent of Jesus,	491
The *Spiritual* Worship adopted and continued by Jesus and his Apostles,	492
All Pagan Systems Corruptions of the Hebrew,	493
One common practice in Pagan and Hebrew Worship,	496
The six parts of Religious Worship as established by Jesus,	497
The Apostolic Church continues them,	498
Post-Apostolic Church continues them	499
Testimony of Tertullian and Justin Martyr,	500
Singing not mentioned by Justin,	502
This defect supplied by Pliny,	502
Testimony of the earliest Writers,	503
This simplicity of Worship soon corrupted,	504
Judaism Corrupted it,	505
Paganism Corrupted it,	506
Progress of this two-fold Corruption	507
Still further Progress,	508
I. Delineation of Roman Worship,	509
Its development very gradual,	510
So slow that much of it is quite recent,	510
The Roman Breviary and Missal,	511
Roman division of the day,	513
1. The Matin Services Portrayed,	514
2. Services at Prime,	517
3. Third-Hour Service,	518
4. Sixth-Hour Service,	518
5. Ninth-Hour Service,	519
6. Vespers,	519
7. Compline,	519
Idolatry of the Roman Worship,	520
No Personal Religion in it,	522
II. Delineation of the Worship of the Greek Catholics,	524
Warmth of the Oriental mind,	524
Consequent excess of Corruption,	524
Greeks retain the Seven Sacraments,	525
Greek Priests usurp universal sway,	526
Citizens can do nothing without their intervention,	527
Fasts and Feasts of the Greeks,	527
Their Worship of Saints,	527
Their Adoration of Pictures,	528
Their Worship really Pagan,	529
Their Liturgy so voluminous that their Priests cannot generally comprehend it,	530
Greek Worship in Russia,	530
Greek Worship in Greece itself,	531
Its total Perversion and Corruption,	531
III. Delineation of the Worship of the Ancient Gauls,	532
As ancient as any other,	532
It resisted the Corruptions of Rome,	533
General Description of it,	533
It was very Pure and Simple,	534
IV. Origin and History of the Worship of the Church of England,	535
The Puritan argument against English Ritual as being derived from Rome,	536
The Fact supposed not a Fact,	536
Church of England of Apostolic Origin,	536
St. Paul Visited Great Britain,	537
St. Peter never there,	537
Churches of Gaul and Britain in close Alliance,	538
The old English and Gallic Rituals similar,	539
The four Original and Independent Rituals,	539
Antiquity of them,	539
Roman Customs introduced into England,	540
History of these Customs in the English Ritual,	541
English Ritual narrow and exclusive,	542
General aspect like that of Rome,	544
V. Origin and Character of the Wesleyan System of Worship,	544
It is derived from that of England,	544
1. It is partly extemporaneous, like the Worship of the Primitive Church,	544
Individual Worship must be extemporaneous,	545
A Liturgy well adapted to individual wants impossible,	547

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
2. It is partly Written, or Formal, as a portion of it must be agreed upon, to adapt it to the common use of a Congregation,	550
Jesus prescribed a form of Common Prayer,	550
The first Christians must have used such a form,	551
They did use such a form,	552
Antiquity of St. Basil's Liturgy,	556
Antiquity of the Ritual of St. James,	553
St. Mark's Ritual,	554
The Roman Missal,	554
All these traceable to the Fifth Century,	555
One of them to the Fourth,	555
No time when Rituals were not in Use,	556
Forms of Prayer have been used in nearly all sects of Christians,	556
Calvin prepared one,	556
Knox prepared one,	556
Baxter wrote one for the English Puritans,	556
Lord's Prayer older than the Church,	556
Prayer at the Release of John and Peter,	557
Forms first used only for the Sacraments,	557
Methodism, though taking its Ritual from England, goes back to the practice of the original Church,	560
Its Worship one of the causes of its great Success,	560
3. The Ritual of Methodism full and ample,	561
The *via media* argument,	561
Of no great value,	561
It belongs to Methodism,	562
What Methodism can say to all Liturgists,	563
What it can say to Puritans,	563
Methodist Ritual bounded by just limits,	564
4. Worship of Methodism a free Worship,	566
Not so in Liturgic Denominations,	566
Not so in the Churches of the Puritans and their Descendants,	567
Woman excluded by Puritanism,	568
Woman excluded by Presbyterians,	568
Inconsistency of this exclusion,	569
No reason for it,	570
Methodism does not exclude Woman,	571
Methodism welcomes her to its Worship,	571
Influence of Methodism upon her,	571
Influence of Woman for Methodism,	572
5. The Worship of Methodism an Earnest and Heartfelt Worship,	572
Saying of Dr. Chalmers,	572
Its Earnestness founded on strong Convictions,	573
This Earnestness in the Pulpit,	573
It is repeated in the Congregation,	574
The Earnestness of Methodism not denied,	566
It is rather charged with Extravagance,	576
This Charge Answered,	577
The Reformation at first Extravagant,	577
Puritanism at first Extravagant,	578
Methodism followed the general Law of Nature,	578
A full day of Wesleyan Worship,	579
Preparatory Services,	579
Introductory Services,	590
The Love-Feast,	590
The Sermon,	581
The Sacraments,	582
The Social Gathering,	584
Conclusion and application of the subject,	586

Digitized by Google

METHODISM SUCCESSFUL.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST METHODIST.

On a cold wintry night, in the month of February, 1709, the little rectory of Epworth, England, was discovered to be on fire. Within it, in addition to the good rector and his wife, there was a large family of children, who, with the servants, were sleeping the deep sleep of innocence and of childhood. The mother of the family, being ill at the time, was occupying a room separate from that of her husband; and there nestled at her bosom her last-born infant, who was then not quite two months old. The entire household consisted of eleven or twelve persons. It was one of those nights when the careworn parents feel an unspoken happiness, that, the labors of the day being over, their charge has been put to rest; and the keepers of that charge, as they lay their heads upon their own pillows, after having piously committed all to the better guardianship of Heaven, can lie under their roof, and enjoy, even in midwinter, in spite of the rushing winds and rattling storm, that feeling of security and defended quiet which every man at some time has felt. There is nothing, at this happy moment, so apt to linger upon the mind and give it pause ere laying off its watch, as the thought of the possibility of fire; and this unwelcome idea must have been now a besetting intruder upon the repose of the minister of Epworth; for twice before this night, the rough and

Digitized by Google

roisterous hemp-growers and flax-combers of his parish, resentful to the searching ministrations of his pulpit, had attempted to fire his dwelling. It was a most evil time for such a deed; but evil men choose not in mercy their opportunity. A little after midnight, a brand from the burning roof fell upon the bed where one of the elder children was sleeping, and burnt her feet; and about the same moment the cry of "*fire*" resounded from without. The father was roused by it. He knew at once what the dismal note meant. Rushing through the smoke to the apartment of his wife, he bade her and the two eldest girls to rise and secure their own safety as best they might. He next burst the door of the nursery, where the five smaller children were sleeping under the supervision of the maid. She, a faithful and trusted servant, caught the youngest in her arms, and commanded the rest to follow her. On reaching the lower hall, where the flames were spreading all around, they found the great door locked. The key was not in it. The father flew to an upper room and brought it down just as the staircase was taking fire. The door was opened; but the flames from the outside were driven in with such fury by a strong northeast wind, which was blowing at the time, that it was found to be impossible to face them. Some of the children, the larger ones, broke through the nearest windows, and so effected their escape. The smaller ones, in charge of the faithful maid, ran out through a little door in the rear of the house into the garden. The mother could not reach the garden door; and her condition did not admit of her climbing to the windows. After three ineffectual efforts to face the flames and make her way through the hall door, she deliberately stood long enough in the midst of the devouring element to ask help of God; and then she walked straight forward through smoke and fire to the open air. Her own expression was that she *waded* through the fire; and, though in her night dress, she escaped without injury, excepting a

Digitized by Google

little scorching of her hands and face. The father, having as soon as possible assembled his household, found to his horror that one of them, a boy of six years, was missing. He ran to the hall, and finding that the staircase would no longer bear his weight, and seeing that the house itself could stand but a few moments longer, fell upon his knees amidst the burning ruins, and commended the soul of his child to God. The little boy, in the meantime, had been awakened, and commenced calling for the maid. The maid not answering, he ran to the door and found everything about him in a blaze. With remarkable sagacity and great presence of mind, far beyond what could be expected of his years, he made his way to a high window, where, by mounting upon a chest, he showed himself in the light of the fire to the crowd below. There was not a moment to be lost. Not waiting for a ladder, several of the bystanders formed a close circle by locking their arms and shoulders together, when another leaped up and stood upon them, when he found himself near enough to the child to take him as he dropt himself from his perilous position. Immediately, the roof fell in, and all that had been the home of a quiet and sleeping family, but an hour before,—building, furniture, clothing, books, manuscripts, everything—was one mass of raging and relentless flame. The family, however, had been saved; and as the good old clergyman received into his arms the last of his rescued children, he exclaimed: "Come, neighbors, let us kneel down: let us give thanks to God! he has given me all of my eight children: let the house go, *I am rich enough!*"[1]

[1] Southey ("Life of Wesley," vol. i. p. 59, Harp. Ed.) says that "Mr. Wesley was roused by a cry of fire, little *imagining* that it was in his own house," which is making a very stupid man of the learned old rector, whose dwelling had been twice fired by the same hands before. It must be remembered, however, that the same man who wrote this Tory memoir of Wesley, was also the author of the Red-republican Wat Tyler; and we

Digitized by Google

The reader need scarcely be informed that the lad here rescued, as it were at the last moment, and under circumstances so impressive, was John Wesley, son of Rev. Samuel Wesley, a learned and very pious clergyman of the Church of England; nor can it be supposed that a boy of his character, as it was afterward known to be, could pass through such a scene, without receiving from it a mark that should never leave him; and all the events of that memorable night, which swept away from that family every earthly treasure, as they would necessarily proceed and form the constant topics of domestic conversation, would not fail to make deeper and deeper this original impression. The father had a home to provide among a people who had not entirely appreciated his labors; he had a house to build out of the scanty surplus or savings of his humble living; he had a wardrobe to buy, not for himself only, but for every member of his family; he had a library to obtain, without which a man of his literary tastes would scarcely feel himself to be a living being; and all these things had to be talked over, time after time, in the presence of his children. The one great topic, however, with a person of his pure and lofty piety, would always be, as we know it always was, the debt of gratitude he owed a gracious Providence for sparing to him every member of his family; nor could any individual of the number feel anything less than a special gratitude for the rescue of little John, who, had he not been roused at the very moment, or had the thought not struck him instantly of climbing to the window that he might be seen, would have perished amidst the flames of that conflagration. He himself, a child of precocious thought and remarkable sensibility, not only from his own reflections, but from the incessant allusions to the subject in the family, became so possessed with the

are therefore to expect from him, not only some confusion of facts, but some contradictions to human nature.

Digitized by Google

idea of his indebtedness to God for his escape, that it ever afterward constituted in his own mind the great era of his existence. The older he became, the more he reflected on it, and the profounder hold it took upon his heart. His mother, a woman of extraordinary abilities and exalted piety, seeing the turn the incident was taking in the mind of her most promising if not darling child, did not fail to cherish it. She gave it a still more decidedly religious direction; she ventured sometimes to make the boy see in it a meaning quite beyond the significance of ordinary events, as if Providence might have spared him for some special good; and this presumption she piously supported by referring to himself, mainly at least, a curious fact connected with the fire which has not been mentioned. The day after it, the father of the family was walking around among the ruins of his former home, meditating deeply and solemnly on the dispensation of the previous night, and perhaps seeking for some relic, some memorial, of all that he had lost, when he saw and picked up the fragment of a leaf of his favorite polyglot Bible, scorched on every side of it, and so entirely burnt as to leave on it only the following few words of the Latin Testament: "Vade, vende omnia quæ habes, et attole crucem, et sequere me." This was all he could find of what had once been the well-stored manse at Epworth; he carried it to his wife; and she, to make the whole event as deep and lasting an impression as might be on the one she thought most likely to receive it, laid it up and often translated it, and that with a personal emphasis, to little John: "*Go, sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross, and follow me!*"

John, however, was not only a thoughtful, but a joyous and sprightly boy. His sports were those of other children; but, amidst all his exuberant frolic, there settled down upon him a serious underlying of sentiment and reflection; and he seemed, from the period of the fire, to have put on the habit of something like what would be expected of a youthful pre-

Digitized by Google

sentiment of what he was to be. At home, after the restoration of the rectory, he remained the pupil of his mother, as there is no account of his ever having attended school in his native village; but we soon find him an object of particular observation at the parish church; for his father admitted him to the communion table, in company with the older communicants, when he was only eight years old; and this precocity of development of his religious nature followed him to the Charter-House, where he became a studious and energetic scholar in the year 1714, when he was only eleven years of age. During all the time that he continued at this preparatory school, he was noted for his buoyancy of disposition, and for a severity of purpose, which so seldom unite in the character even of a man. Though fond of recreation, especially that of an intellectual bearing, such as reading and conversation in little clubs, it was evident to all his associates, and particularly to the master of the institution, that there was a self-consciousness within him which boys but seldom have. The fire at Epworth was still bright in his memory, and it may be burning in his heart.[2]

The next thing we see of him, he is settled down at

[2] Among his singularities while at this school, it is mentioned by Southey ("Life of Wesley," vol. i. p. 60) and emphasized by Isaac Taylor ("Wesley and Methodism") that he was in the habit of stirring his blood every morning, in the way of paying up for his incessant application, by running three times—always just three times—around a certain inclosure in his neighborhood. Here we see, in the boy, the economy and method of the man. Walking required too much time; nor would any exercise be availing, or persevered in, unless made habitual; and so, he who was then a sort of a little method-ist without knowing it, must have set times to *run*. But here, again, the boy would be robbed of his characteristics; for the practice was recommended by his father; but how many fathers have advised similar acts to their children with no other result than forgetfulness, or neglect. It was the virtue of little John, that every such piece of advice found in him a groundwork in which it could not help but *stick!*

Digitized by Google

Oxford, at the age of sixteen years, as a student of Christ-Church College, where he is at once recognized as a youth of modest but self-relying aspect, respectful to his superiors, obedient to order, diligent in his studies, and exceedingly attentive to the cultivation of his moral nature. Possessed of that hilarity of soul, which would seem to have marked him out as a special devotee of pleasure, he continued to enjoy the world with exemplary moderation, while he proceeded to become more and more the embodiment of his mother's idea, that he was born, or rather saved, for some solemn and worthy end. His mother's influence, in fact, continued still to act upon him. She was everywhere a felt presence with him. He and his father used to exchange occasional letters on purely literary topics; but, with or without occasion, his mother's pen was always busy with his religious culture; and he was himself not slow to profit by her precepts, and even to listen to the half-covert suggestions, or suggestive hints and glimpses, that God would scarcely have interposed to rouse him from his childhood sleep, and inspire him with a sagacity for the moment so far beyond his years, if he was to grow up to be, after all, but an ordinary man. The thought, however, whether coming from maternal hints, or from the swellings of his own heart, never made him for one moment arrogant, or vain. He was altogether the more humble for it. He toiled also the harder at his books, that he might the better prepare himself for that mission, for which he now dreamed he had been preserved; and precisely here, too, will be found the solution of that singular course of life, which, about this time, he undertook to lead. Religion, instead of being an incident to life, as with society about him, began to be with him nothing less than life itself. Nor was the service of God to be any doubtful, or half-way affair, if he, the servant, had really received such a signal rescue at his hands. Besides giving himself up to the study of the Scriptures, he collected a little

Digitized by Google

company of his college friends, who, following his directions, entered upon the observance of every duty that was supposed to pertain to a serious and earnest life. The nightly meetings of this youthful band, however, were no gatherings of a set of moody and melancholy monks; for any circle of which the brilliant and witty student of Christ-Church, and afterward fellow of Lincoln College, John Wesley, was the center, must be full of the splendors of a heartfelt joy; but, in the midst of a great amount of native cheerfulness, which must have communicated itself to the most sober of his companions, there remained that settled style of deep and thorough thinking, which had gradually grown up in him from the period and event of the Epworth conflagration. They read "The Christian's Pattern" and "The Rules of Holy Living and Dying" as if these works had been fictions and the readers young bloods of no purpose in life higher than a momentary pleasure. They commented upon these productions; and whenever they found points beyond their depth, young Wesley, still conscious of the source of the better part of all his instructions in religion, would write to his mother for her solutions; and she, after answering his inquiries with an ability not then common in her sex, and settling questions in polemical theology as if she had studied nothing else, would scarcely ever omit to improve the opportunity of recalling him, again and again, to the memorable incident of his early years, and to the high and peculiar work for which he had been so wonderfully preserved. He passed through his collegiate course with great distinction; he was noted for his profound and splendid scholarship; he manifested every token of a purely literary life; he was elected a fellow of Lincoln College by those who had long known his acquisitions and his gifts; he took the chair of instruction in the most erudite literary institution of his country, if not of his age; but literature, after all, dear as it was to him, could give him no

Digitized by Google

such success, no such honor, as to drown that loftier impulse acquired from his mother's counsels, which was now beginning to take its place within him as a settled conviction of his mind and heart. To the little company at first formed, so far as they still remained, he added such of his pupils as desired to join him in his effort to lead a true and noble life; and when the storm of sarcasm, and afterward of persecution, which is so sure to fall upon anything so singular in a college, began to beat with greater and greater fury upon their heads, he stood as firm as a pillar, while the larger part of his associates left him to the ridicule and reproaches of those of the university, professors as well as scholars, who had undertaken to be his foes. A sense of his mission still held him up; his mother's prophecy was beginning in earnest to fulfill itself; and even the father now undertook to defend and encourage him in his course; but there was no power so strong as that inward feeling, by this time entirely his own, that God had saved him from imminent destruction for the performance of some work which no other man had done. His father now urged him to leave the classic shades of Oxford and become his curate at Epworth, which could hardly fail, in that case, to remain in the family after his own decease; but the work which the son had begun in college, though now reduced, by the causes just alluded to, from twenty-five to five individuals, would have gone to ruin in his absence; and this, in that son's opinion, was a matter of more consequence than the preservation of the Epworth living to his father's family. So he remained at Oxford, proceeding with his studies, but more particularly with the building up of his little club of praying students. This, of course, would be looked upon as a singularity; but a person whom God had saved in a peculiar manner had a right to some peculiarity; and, therefore, neither the entreaties of his relations, nor the opposition of the world, could move him from his purpose. He was eager to be singular, if he

Digitized by Google

could thereby accomplish something, he as yet knew not what, which should be worthy of him by whose interposition he had been rescued; and thus, instead of slacking his hand at the instance of whatever opprobrium was heaped upon him, he only went the further in his enterprise, as if the resistance he met with was a proof to him of his mother's early and constant interpretation of his destiny. He proceeded to lay out a regular programme of operations for himself and his associates. They were each day to spend a certain time in religious conversation with the students; they were to visit the prisons at another definite hour and talk with the prisoners; they were to give regular lessons, in the lower departments of education, to certain poor families in their neighborhoods; they were to take upon themselves the habitual care of a school of a charitable foundation; they were to assume the religious oversight of the parish workhouse; and all the hours not otherwise appropriated, they were to devote to such general acts of charity as they might find it in their way to perform. It was to be a particular object with them to cultivate as extensive an acquaintance as possible among the members of the university; and they at once commenced inviting them to little social breakfasts, where, over a dish of tea, they began to inculcate their ideas of the higher life. A perfect system of operations was thus inaugurated, of which the still youthful Wesley, though seconded by his brother Charles, and by such persons as James Hervey and George Whitefield, was the soul and center. He here began to feel that he was really, at last, beginning to fulfill the prophesy of his pious mother.[3]

[3] John Wesley had written to his mother before this time that he should prefer to die before her; but he afterward corrected himself; when she, who could never omit an opportunity to touch the spring on which she was always pressing, answered him, "You did well to correct that fond desire of dying before me; since you do not know what work God may have for you to do ere you leave the world."

Digitized by Google

But a call was now made upon him which could but deepen this impression. His good old father had passed away, and with him the succession to the rectory of Epworth; and, when that succession would still have offered no temptation to a young man who believed himself to have been spared to the world for no ordinary position, and for no common labors and sacrifices, his heart beat quick to a summons of an unusual character at that period. He was invited to go out to Georgia, a British colony, as a missionary to the Indian population. Here was something new, something out of the common track, something having an affinity to the great thought which had been, for so long a time, swelling in his bosom. He accepted the overtures made him. He went out. He labored industriously and faithfully. He was too strict, however, to be at once successful among a motley crowd of people in a new settlement like that of Georgia. He carried with him this sense of the peculiarity of the call of Providence upon him. He must do everything in his own way, as no one else had ever done it, if need be, or disappoint the greater part of his expectations. He found himself at once opposed to the authorities of the colony, unpopular with the raw inhabitants, comparatively useless to the Indians, and in almost every way discountenanced, discouraged, and unsuccessful. He returned to his native land, humbled but not cast down; for his ruling idea was sufficient to sustain him; the very failure of his plans was to him but a part of a greater plan of Providence to qualify him for some more important labor; and thus, whether at home or abroad, whether in prosperity or adversity, he was everywhere toiling in the light, and feeling the influence, of the fire of Epworth.[4]

[4] Dr. Emory ("Life of Wesley," by Watson, p. 44) has shown the proper contempt for the silly slanders against the moral rectitude of Mr. Wesley while in Georgia. The simple truth is, that he paid some attention to a Miss Hopkey; that he at length became satisfied of her being not only

Digitized by Google

On his way to America, he had crossed the ocean in company with some deeply experienced and devoted Moravian missionaries; he had received from them a new idea of personal religion; he now meditated on that idea without cessation, and sought from another of the Brethren, whom he had found in London, further instructions in relation to it; he read, prayed and struggled to come into such a heart-felt experience of regenerating grace as had been pointed out to him; and the result was, that on a certain evening, the exact date being the 24th day of May, 1738, at a quarter to nine o'clock, while listening with profound attention to the reading of what Luther says in relation to the new birth in his "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans," he felt a new and strange emotion break upon his heart, which seemed to him, upon reflection, to satisfy all the conditions of the change spoken of by the great Saxon Reformer, and every mark of it as given him by the Moravians. Filled to overflowing with peace, and gratitude, and joy, he sought out Peter Bohler, the Moravian Brother just alluded to, who was about establishing a mission in the heart of London. He compared experiences with Bohler, and he found his own to correspond to his temporary pattern; but wishing to be made doubly certain of his real state, and thinking, it is probable, that no pains could be too great for one who was to act some considerable part on the theater of life, he resolved

an unfit person to be his wife, but not worthy of the Christian name; and, therefore, after he had ceased to have any intercourse with her whatsoever, he declined to admit her to the communion table of his parish. Such events might happen, in ordinary individuals, a thousand times without eliciting a remark, or with the entire approbation of the public; but the authorities of the colony detested Mr. Wesley for the strictness of his doctrines; the people despised him for the severity of his discipline; and thus, between the two classes, with the silence or assistance of the lady herself, it was easy, in a raw settlement, to get up and propagate a persecution and a story, the only value of which now is the useful lesson, that the best of men are apt to be the most basely slandered!

Digitized by Google

to visit Hernhut and converse with the most enlightened of this devoted and intelligent fraternity; and so, after laying out his inward life to the examination of Count Zinzendorf, and to the elders of Hernhut, and listening to several exceedingly happy discourses, public and private, on the nature, proofs and fruit of the interior life of faith, he returned again to England with a full assurance that he was now a new creature in Christ Jesus, who, the free gift of the everlasting Father, was consciously "formed within him," and to whom he had solemnly consecrated every talent and every power he possessed by vows never to be forgotten.

Now it was, when he had passed through this long period of preparation, and with his heart bounding at the thought that he was at last indeed about to start on the great mission of his life, that he looked again over the path he had already pursued, and forward to the yet indefinable work which he more than ever felt that he was called to do. One thing, however, is to be specially remembered. If, at any former time, while pondering upon the oft-repeated suggestions of his mother, or listening to the aspirations of his own nature, he had ever been conscious of a little worldly pride, or personal aggrandizement, no such thought, no feeling of this character had now the smallest place within him. Everything personal, everything that had been ever so slightly shaded with ambition in an unworthy sense, had passed away forever. Not only had his failure in America served to humble him, as he now openly acknowledged, but the deep work of repentance and faith toward God, the very nature of which it is to prostrate all self-reliance, at least all independence of a higher Power, had swept him clean of every kind and degree of selfishness. He had now gone through another conflagration; all his earth-given treasures were but a heap of good-for-nothing ashes; and he began to say to every one about him, as often as he was inquired of in relation to his condition, that he was "nothing but a sinner saved by

Digitized by Google

grace." Having no settlement, and desiring none, he had no alternative but to preach promiscuously, wherever a pulpit happened to be opened to him. Every congregation he addressed was stirred to its very depths by the novelty and power of his proclamations. The great metropolis was roused. All ranks, all classes, followed him. His mark was soon made. His character was at once known. His reputation was not only established, but sounded abroad, both far and near. He was no longer an ordinary man. He preached as no other clergyman did in the churches where he ministered. He told the people, in plain bold terms, that his sins were pardoned, that a new and glorious life had sprung up within him, by the power of the eternal Spirit, and that they needed this salvation, and might every one enjoy it, as well as he. He had now begun, in a word, that great and hitherto unknown work, for which he still believed, though now with an oppressive sense of his corresponding responsibility, that God had so remarkably preserved him from the burning rectory at Epworth. This incident still stood fresh in his recollection. It yet remained as the exponent of his former life. It was more than ever the finger of Providence that pointed out his future; and it was at this grand opening of his career, that, being called on to have his portrait taken, he finally consented; but had engraved below it a house on fire, with the motto underneath: "*Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?*" as if these words expressed, as they really did, the life-long conviction never before so plainly uttered, but which had always been the secret and sacred burden of his soul!

Here, then, we have before us the first Methodist. His history begins, not with his conversion, but with that terrible moment when he was taken from the burning manse, after he had been given up to his fate to perish in the flames of that fearful conflagration. His conversion, instead of being the beginning, was the completion of a process, which

Digitized by Google

had been for just thirty years going on within him. That almost miraculous preservation of his life is the starting point from which his subsequent existence, with all that there is in it, dates. It is the germ that expanded, under a variety of circumstances, and finally became a grown and perfect plant at the instant of his regeneration. It is the nut of the tree which has since spread out such a lofty crown of branches, and which has dropped such harvests of golden fruit on the soil of so many countries. No man without first knowing this fact, and giving it its due place, can ever understand the secret history and real character of that remarkable individual, of whom Methodism is but little else than a general expansion. We may read his most memorable deeds; we may hang over the pages that relate to us his wonderful career; we may write and peruse brilliant histories, not only of himself, but of the great enterprise set into operation by him; but if we begin not here to study him and his achievement, our knowledge of the great Wesleyan Revival will be simply superficial. Our true course is to place the foot of our historic compass at this *point du jour* of his earthly career, and then, taking for our radius the distance between this point and the hour of his birth to God, strike the arc that shall cut that hour exactly; for between the two we shall find everything that needs to be studied in our most critical investigations of what he was; and *in* what he was, from the first to the second of these periods, we shall also discover every element afterward brought out by Providence and wrought into what is now known as universal Methodism. It is not the purpose of these pages to relate the facts, either of Mr. Wesley's life, or of the system brought into existence by his agency. It is their design to get below the facts; to determine their origin and their consequences; and, in the prosecution of this plan, the first thing was to set before the reader the leading idea by whose force the illustrious

Digitized by Google

Founder of Methodism became so different from all other clergymen of the Church of England, even at the beginning of his career, and the Father of a movement which has had no parallel since the apostolic era. We have found the solution of the problem of his life at Epworth. Standing in the light of that burning mass, from which the boy of six was taken at the latest moment, all is clear from that time forward. Standing at any other point, no man can give, as no man has given, any satisfactory reason why he was so entirely unlike his brothers and his father; why he was so immediately marked out as a mystery at the Charter-House school, when he was but eleven years of age; why, at Oxford, his advent was as noted as his graduation and subsequent connection with his college; why, when he had taken orders, he would not accept of his father's overture of becoming his curate and successor, in the regular way, at Epworth; why he could, nevertheless, so promptly receive the appointment of missionary and teacher to a strange race of people, a race of unlettered heathen, in a new and remote region, when he knew himself qualified particularly for the highest positions in the most civilized and enlightened country; why he could not be satisfied, as the best of his generation had been before him, with the ordinary and sufficient evidences of his conversion, but must make a pilgrimage to a foreign land for a more perfect satisfaction; why, after his return, and when his reputation would have soon lifted him to almost any elevation, perhaps to the very highest, in the church of which he was an honest member, he would not settle down as a regular pastor, but resolved to spend his life, as it would seem, in an irregular itinerancy from parish to parish within the Church of England; and why, in a word, from the day of his conversion to the day of his decease, he kept on in the even tenor of his way, in spite of a thousand obstacles, and through reproaches, and sneers, and oppositions, and calumnies, and persecutions, which would have crushed the spirit and para-

Digitized by Google

lyzed the power of any ordinary man, till he had laid the foundation and marked out the superstructure of a system as peculiar and Providential as himself. The explanation of it all is simply this: his mother taught him that his rescue from the Epworth fire was proof of his having been created for some extraordinary achievement in the cause of the church; Wesley believed the prophecy; and (God helping him), he made it true!

With this state of the case, however, which is based upon the fundamental facts of the Wesleyan domestic history, there is no ground for transferring from the son to the mother the honor of having given being to his enterprise. It may be said, it is true, that if there had been no Susannah Wesley, there would have been no Methodism, because there would have been not only no such John Wesley as there was, but no John Wesley at all; but this would be a very superficial statement, below the character of a historian, and certainly beneath the dignity of a critic. When John Wesley was first accused of being the father of the "Holy Club" at Oxford, the good old rector of Epworth laughingly observed, that, in that case, he supposed he must therefore be looked upon as its grandfather, as John was acknowledged to be his son. In the same way, Mrs. Wesley bears a causative relation to the movement; and she even did very much toward inspiring her child with the lofty ambition of doing *some* great thing for the world; but there is, nevertheless, not one element of what is now known as Methodism—not even that of lay-preaching, which took its origin from her mind. She contributed not a little to the making of her son what he was; she encouraged and counseled him for many years; but she was no more the "mother of Methodism," as she has been sometimes styled, than Mrs. Newton, who was the good genius to little Isaac from his cradle upward, was thereby the author of the "Principia," or the mother of Sir Isaac's theory of the solar system. Some, on the other hand,

Digitized by Google

have conferred the title of Founder of Methodism upon Charles Wesley, because he was the first of the club to receive the epithet of Methodist; but the name was given him before he was converted, and in the absence of his brother; and it is well known, too, that instead of his having introduced any features into the system established by that brother, he opposed the introduction of almost every one of them. Whitefield, also, has been honored with the title, because he was the first to turn away from the regular places of religious instruction, and take to the fields, and byways, and hedges, as a preacher of the Gospel. It is clear, however, from the facts of his history, that he not only turned away from the churches, but almost equally also from Mr. Wesley, without even adding, or causing to be added, or suggesting, a single custom which has been incorporated as an essential constituent into the Wesleyan system. Wesleyanism, in a word, is the legitimate offspring of the mind, heart, education, and *experience* of the Rev. John Wesley. He was a special man raised up by Providence, and fitted by Providential dealings, for a special work; and he who would understand either the individual or his achievement, must study that period of his life that lies between his conversion and the fire at Epworth.

Whatever may have been the origin or the character of Methodism, however, it had proceeded but a little way in the work of self-development, before its course was stopped, to all human appearances, by the sudden and simultaneous interposition of the authorities of the Church of England. The crowds following Mr. Wesley offended the aristocratic taste of the nobility; they wished still to enjoy their easy hour in church without being suffocated by the dense masses of the in-rushing population; and it is likely, too, that they were yet more offended by the directness and closeness of the new preaching. There was then, as there has ever been in England, too intimate a sympathy between the nobility and

Digitized by Google

the clergy to admit of any wish of the one to go unnoticed by the other. Without warning, therefore, though having the implied sanction of the bishop from whom he had received ordination, Mr. Wesley was brought to a stand by the refusal of all the parishes of London to open their churches to his ministrations; and the parishes of all the smaller cities, and finally those of the extreme rural districts, all over the island, with a common servility, soon followed the metropolitan example. There were no complaints, no charges of any character, alleged against Mr. Wesley. No one denied that he was a regular clergyman of the Church of England; that he was a genuine and hearty believer of the creeds and articles; that he had talents and acquisitions of the highest order; that his personal piety was beyond all question and even eminent; but the higher classes, or rather the highest class, felt that the air of their nobility was offended by the popularity of his discourses, if not by the personality of his appeals and applications; and, therefore, without trial, without reproof, without remonstrance, in the midst of a most wonderful series of successful meetings, by which the capital had been roused as it had never been since the settlement of the Reformation, nearly every church in Britain, as in a night, was forever shut against him. Here, then, was a man called of God, and set apart by the authorities of his denomination to preach the Gospel; he had spent thirty years of his life in laborious and honest preparation for the high and sacred duties of his calling; always zealous for the cause of religion, his heart now throbbed with desire to devote all he was to the fulfillment of the great commission; would they only suffer him to go forward, with scarcely any other sanction, he had a manly conviction in him, that, with the help of heaven, which he knew had been thus far granted, he should be able to rouse to life the expiring spirit of piety in the communion of which he was nothing less than a most cordial member, and impart power and triumph to the cause

Digitized by Google

of God throughout the island, if not the empire, of Great Britain. But the nobles and great gentlemen were not willing. The clergy, a class of worldly, irreligious, wicked men, with only occasional exceptions, would rather sacrifice the cross of Christ than lose the good opinion and patronage of the ruling orders. The new preacher could not be dealt with by law, and silenced by authority of the judges, for the constitution of his country was favorable, in form at least, to religious liberty. Nor was Wesley an offender against any statute, or any canon, or any privilege of his profession. There was no Hall of Judgment, no Pilate, with power to crucify him for constructive treason; and so, the only thing possible was silently to ignore, to excommunicate, to banish him from the threshold of every church edifice, to murder him by slander, and then to bury him beneath the weight of noble and clerical reproaches. Turning, therefore, with a sorrowful heart, from the tabernacles which he had hoped to serve, and wondering in the fervor of his soul why he could not be suffered to do good among his fellow-men, when his heart was breaking with the pent-up zeal to do it, he paused a moment at the outer border of the great and common world, troubled to know his duty, then boldly and resolutely entered it, single-handed and alone, to execute the work which Providence had now more than ever committed to his hands. It was a most disheartening prospect for a man of educated sensibilities; but let us not be discouraged; we are to see more coming up, as the fruit of this man's labor, than from every noble and every other clergyman of that day in England: "*He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him!*"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF METHODISM.

JESUS, the author of our religion, was carrying the populace of all Palestine with him, and rapidly gathering a force which threatened the overthrow of the national establishment, when the short-sighted Sanhedrin imagined that, if they could take the life of the leader of this faction, his cause would necessarily disintegrate and fall to pieces; and therefore, they did that very thing, by crucifying him, which was indispensable to the consummation of his plan of life, and which laid the only foundation for the perpetuity and propagation of his power forever. Luther, the reformer of this religion, after it had been lost in the superstitions of a thousand years, lifted up the voice of warning and of instruction in middle Europe, and all the nations were beginning to listen to his mighty utterance, when his enemies so pursued him that he was compelled to quit the scene of his labors, and shut himself up in the Wartzburgh; but, within the walls of his prison he executed that translation of the Scriptures, without which he could have made little further progress in the movement of the reformation; and thus again the foes of the truth became the chief abettors, in the hand of Providence, of its prosperity and success. In the same way, Wesley was making good his beginning in the work of recovering the fallen Christianity of his country—was rousing the popular mind as it had not been roused since the days of Luther—was rapidly advancing toward a glorious revival of a genuine religion throughout and within the old church of England, when his career was suddenly arrested

Digitized by Google

by a movement which, while it thrust him away from every pulpit of the established order, and from nearly all association with the leading members of his own denomination, repaid him and the world a thousand fold by turning his steps toward the great mass of his countrymen, who, in that age, were almost wholly neglected and consequently irreligious, but on whom, nevertheless, rested the best hopes and expectations of his nation. Had he been suffered to go forward with his plans, within the church of his choice, the English would have been, without doubt, the most spiritual national establishment existing; it never could have become, however, a popular church, or possessed the means of great usefulness to the masses of the people; for its entire economy is too elaborate and too rigid to admit of any considerable adaptation to the wants and changing habits of mankind; but it would soon have put on a new appearance and burned with a novel splendor. This, however, was not to be. The Omniscient plainly saw, that the system of the lascivious Henry the Eighth, modified and remodeled by every successive monarch, and by quarreling parliament after parliament, as well as by every ambitious primate, was not the system in which the vital spirit of Christianity could best live, or through which it could send its best influences out upon the world. Wesley was rejected; the Church of England lost its vitality and sunk into an immediate spiritual imbecility; and a new order of things sprang up among the people, which, from that day forward, has been growing in a most marvelous manner, till it is now the most numerous, at least, of the evangelical denominations of modern times. That very Methodism, which the nobles and clergy of Great Britain spurned, and which they imagined they had blasted by the rejection of Mr. Wesley, has been since looked to by their successors as the chief source of whatever real spirituality there is now in the Church of England, and by the world at large as the quickener to all other denominations

Digitized by Google

on both sides of the Atlantic, while it as certainly embodies more religious power than the English church has ever wielded, or is likely to wield in the progress of coming time. The Gospel of Jesus, indeed, depends but little, if it depends at all, on outward circumstances. The favor of the world can do but little for it; and its frown is nearly impotent against it; for it is a characteristic of its history, from the days of its Founder forward, that the stone which the builders reject is almost certain, by the hand of a far-seeing Providence, to stand at last at the head of the corner in the uprising temple of the Almighty.[1]

With shallow philosophers, and with short-sighted men in general, success is always the great argument; it is all they want to establish the genuineness, if not the truth, of any enterprise; and with the great majority of society, therefore, the cause of Methodism might safely rest on such a general assertion of its past progress, and of its present power, as could be made in a single paragraph. It is not, however, the purpose of these pages to address the credulity, or the ignorance, of mankind. No wholesale assent, thus gained from the unthinking multitude, would satisfy the demand of the present undertaking. Success is not the oracle, or the argument, in religious operations. It is no criterion of right and wrong in any matter. Pompey was a better general than Cæsar; but the battle of Pharsalia made one an outcast and the other an emperor. The works of Francis Bacon are the bulwark of modern civilization; but they are not read by a hundredth part as many people, at this moment, as are the superficial pages of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," or the productions

[1] Isaac Taylor ("Wesley and Methodism," p. 78) makes the declaration very openly, that "the Episcopal Church—and many of its enlightened adherents have not hesitated to acknowledge this—owes to Methodism, in great part, the modern revival of its energies." He says the same thing elsewhere in relation to the influence of Methodism upon the Protestant denominations generally.

Digitized by Google

of some of our most ephemeral newspaper writers. The religion of Mahomet has more disciples than that of Jesus; and the growth of Mormonism has been and is yet the wonder of the passing generation; but there are few among men of intelligence in any country, who, from the success of these superstitions, would regard them with any reverence. Nor must it be overlooked, that there are persons in society, more than respectable for their information, who honestly contemplate the progress of Methodism as a great social evil. It is, consequently, no certain reason for self-complacency with any member of this denomination, or with any one wishing to do them justice, that, from the most humble origin, they have become the largest religious body in this country, and the most active and successful one in Europe. Still, as it is the design of this volume to make a fundamental examination of Methodism as a system of doctrines, dicipline and worship, and follow every inquiry to its legitimate results, whether making for or against the system, it is essential, at this stage of the process, to determine the exact dimensions of the subject to be examined. The problem to be solved is the success of Methodism; that success, therefore, is no part of the solution; but the solution cannot be reached without beginning, mathematically, with the data. The reader will consequently pass at once from the day when John Wesley, at the first dawn of his prosperity as a preacher, was excluded from all the pulpits of the Church of England, and fix his eye upon the facts of Methodism at the present moment. It may seem to be a dry and barren prospect; but these facts will be found to be eloquent of truth and a full compensation for the most faithful examination:

It was in the year 1738 that the leading churches of London were shut against Mr. Wesley; the remainder of them were closed in the year following; and, therefore, the latter date has been fixed upon as the epoch of the origin of the Wesleyan system At that time, what is now known as

Digitized by Google

Methodism was confined to one solitary person; for his leading views had not yet been wholy accepted by a single individual. George Whitefield, it is true, one of the earliest of the disciples of Mr. Wesley, was out in the world and hard at work in the proclamation of a living gospel; he was just returned from the British colonies of America; but when the two friends met, the die had been cast with Mr. Wesley. Charles Wesley, too, had preached a heartfelt religion in London and at Oxford; he had made himself quite peculiar among the clergymen of the Church of England; but he was still a rank churchman; and it was not till a number of years afterward, that he came fully into the temper and undertaking of his brother. It is, therefore, one hundred and twenty years, not quite a century and a quarter, since there was on the earth but one man known and acknowledged as a Methodist. Now, while there are many persons alive, who have listened to the sermons of the first of the Methodists, historians and critics, for the better comprehension of their subject, are compelled to speak of it under the general divisions of English, American and Missionary Methodism; and these have again to be divided into several component classes.

I. English Methodism embraces the following subdivisions:

1. The British Wesleyan Conference, which covers with its operations England, Scotland, and Ireland, the field which was personally cultivated by Mr. Wesley, is a most flourishing and powerful organization, and reports now, in round numbers, *twenty-five hundred* preachers, and *five hundred thousand* members.

2. The Eastern British American Conference, which spreads itself over the continental and insular possessions of the mother country on both sides of the St. Lawrence, and along the adjacent shores of the Atlantic, gives about *one hundred* preachers, and nearly *seventeen thousand* members.

Digitized by Google

3. The Canadian Wesleyan Conference, which covers the western portion of British America, adds about *three hundred and fifty* preachers, and about *fifty-two thousand* members.

4. The Australian Conference, which takes in all the South Pacific possessions of Great Britain, includes about *one hundred and seventy-five* preachers, and *thirty-four thousand* members.

5. The French Conference, which, though located on a foreign soil, is nevertheless a branch of the English Wesleyan body, embraces about *thirty* preachers, and not far from *fifteen hundred* members.

6. The cluster of smaller bodies in Great Britain, known as Primitive Methodists, Wesleyan Reformers, the Wesleyan Association, New Connection Methodists, etc., all of which make John Wesley their great original, and whose sympathies are entirely Wesleyan, furnishes an aggregate of about *twelve thousand* preachers, and *three hundred thousand* members, they having a larger proportion of local ministers than is common with the Wesleyan bodies.

II. American Methodism, also, is now presented under several departments:

1. The Methodist Episcopal Church, which covers all the free States and Territories, and extends far over the border of the slaveholding States, reports, without mentioning fractions, *fourteen thousand* preachers, and but a trifle less than *one million* of church members, including members by probation.

2. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which is confined mainly to the slaveholding States, furnishes *eight thousand* preachers, and about *seven hundred thousand* members.

3. The Wesleyan Methodists of the United States, a branch from the Methodist Episcopal Church, now report about *three hundred* preachers, and nearly *twenty-five thousand* members.

Digitized by Google

4. The Canada Methodist Episcopal Church, which is another branch from the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, reports about *four hundred* preachers, of which nearly half are traveling ministers, and about *fifteen thousand* members.

5. The Protestant Methodist Church of the United States, still another branch from the same parental stock, is a small but effective body of Wesleyans, who claim to have nearly a *thousand* preachers, and almost a *hundred thousand* members.

III. Missionary Methodism, including all the missions of the parent bodies as above enumerated, is not annually published; but the reader will obtain some idea of their number and extent by the following approximations, and it has been the purpose of the writer to fall within, rather than overstep, the actual statistics:

1. The Home Missionary department of British Methodism is not a separate organization, as the itinerant plan of preaching is itself a missionary system, but is included, so far as the number of ministers and members are concerned, in the returns of the English Conference.

2. The Foreign Missionary Society of the British Wesleyan body is the largest, most active, and most successful organization of its kind in the Protestant world. It has the honor of being the first Protestant missionary society of the two nations speaking the English language; and its statistical tables may be compared with those of any similar associations of modern times. It employs nearly *six hundred* missionaries, and almost a *thousand* other persons assisting in its wide-spread operations. Nearly *four thousand* chapels and other preaching places are filled weekly with the objects of its beneficence, who, including those engaged in the daily labor of the missions, embrace a population, all in foreign countries, of not less than *six hundred thousand* individuals. It employs about *four hundred* ministers; keeps *eight* print-

Digitized by Google

ing presses in operation; gives Sabbath-school instruction to about *one hundred thousand* children; and raises annually, for the support of all these foreign works, about *six hundred thousand* dollars.[2]

3. The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, representing that branch of American Methodism which embraces the non-slaveholding States, is a well-organized institution, of good past success, and increasingly active in its operations. In its foreign department, it has missions in Africa, in China, in South America, in Germany, in Sweden, in Norway, in Denmark, in Bulgaria, and in India; in its domestic department, it employs *two hundred and forty-one* missionaries among the Germans, *eleven* among the Welsh, *two* among the French, *twenty-nine* among the Scandinavians and *nineteen* among the Indians of the United States and Territories; and the whole force of its foreign and domestic missionaries, lay and clerical, whose labors are confined to foreign populations, is at this date just *six hundred and thirty-six*. The number employed on missions to the native population of the United States does not show itself in the returns of the Missionary Society, but is mixed with the regular statistics of the annual conferences; and yet it is quite within the facts to set them down as not less than sufficient to make the sum total of persons engaged as missionaries, in the proper sense of the term, at a round *eight hundred*.

4. The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, is a very recent organization; but it has commenced with great vigor its domestic and foreign operations; and it is beginning to take a high position among the benevolent institutions of our country. In its domestic work, it keeps a present force of over *one hundred and sixty*

[2] The real existence of the Wesleyan Missions dates from the appointment of Dr. Coke, in 1784, as the Superintendent, under the British Conference, of the foreign operations of Methodism.

Digitized by Google

missionaries looking after the mixed populations of destitute and otherwise neglected portions of the southern States; it sends about *thirty* to the aborigines of our southwestern forests; it employs *fifteen or twenty* among the German and other foreign populations of the South; it has *four* men in China; and it dispenses the Gospel to the colored people, slave and free, of the slaveholding States, through the agency of about *one hundred and fifty* missionaries, who do nothing else but to labor for this degraded race. The missionary corps of this young but vigorous society, therefore, reaches the sum total of about *three hundred and sixty* persons.

5. The missionary societies of the many smaller subdivisions of Methodism, European and American, are too numerous to admit of minute analysis in these pages. It is enough to say, that they all sustain the character for diffusive benevolence, not only of our common Christianity, but of their common Methodism. It has been difficult to find exact and recent returns of their missionary operations; but it is entirely safe to give them the general credit of employploying in their field, at home and abroad, at least *four hundred* individuals; and if any of them should be surprised at the comparative meagreness of this concession to their evangelical activity, let it be remembered by them, that, in making up this map of Methodism, it has been a ruling purpose to fall within its actual and well-known limits, as the argument to be drawn from it would be marred, if not defeated, by extravagance or excess.[3]

[3] For all these data, I have depended on the official publications of the several branches of Methodism, but have compared them with other standard publications. I have discovered large *omissions* in the statistical tables published in the Methodist almanacs of this country; but it would be at too great a cost to make them the subject of a note. It may be said, in a word, that the almanac summaries do not keep up with the real progress of Methodism, especially in the United States; and in the almanac for 1859, there are many data given, which were historically

Digitized by Google

Wesleyan Methodism, be it remembered, if the average of times be struck between the beginnings of its several leading organizations has had less than a century on the theater of action; it has had but a hundred and twenty years since the day of the first Methodist; it has labored under oppositions and embarrassments certainly never surpassed in any age of the christian Church; and yet, from some cause or causes, it has prospered and now stands before the world with a solid phalanx of not *less* than *thirty-seven thousand, seven hundred and thirty* ministers, *two thousand* missionaries, and an ascertained aggregate of at least *two millions, eight hundred thousand* members—the largest religious body, of one general theory and practice, of which Protestantism itself can boast.[4]

This, it cannot be denied, is a very grand array of numbers, particularly when the manner of the origin of Methodism, and the facts of its early history are considered; and the figures are so large, that a reader can scarcely pass over

true only several years before. The explanation is, probably, that these works have to be made up about a year in advance, and at a time when the statistics even of their own year have not been published. The reader of the "Methodist Almanac," therefore, like all other almanac readers, must not rely too closely on the statements made; for, as it is always *behind* the truth, when he reads of a sprinkle, it may turn out to be a shower!

[4] Dr. Stevens ("Christian Ad. and Journ.," 1860) gives the round numbers of Methodism as follows: Preachers, 43,209; members, 2,742,395; hearers, 10,000,000. He says, however, that he is plainly inside of the facts, as there were several of the smaller branches very *defectively* reported. I have taken no little pains in obtaining exact information; and I come to similar results; but it must be remembered that I speak only of *Wesleyan* Methodism, while he was numbering all the bodies going under the general name. From all the data I have gathered—which would be too elaborate and ostentatious for a note—my conclusion is, that the number of preachers would be more correctly stated at 50,000; that the membership cannot be less than 3,000,000, when all our missionary stations are included; and that the hearers do not fall below 12,000,000.

Digitized by Google

them without deep reflection. We all read with wonder and delight of the great labors and successes of the first apostles of Christianity; we follow them from Jerusalem over Palestine, and from Palestine over all the neighboring countries, with admiration; we sorrow and joy with them alternately, as they suffer or succeed in their glorious work of propagating the doctrines of salvation; we see such energy, such perseverance, such rapidity of movement, and such excitement all along their pathway, that we seem to think the nations must soon be converted by such holy zeal; but, at the end of the first century, with the best historic guides in our hands, sacred and profane, we pass over the ground of their great labors, and gather up the statistics of their church, when we find that the converts from all the world to the religion of the Cross do not exceed the round sum of five hundred thousand. It would be a hopeless task, I think, for any man to undertake to make the number greater. Now, then, by the side of these results, let us look at the existing condition of Wesleyan Methodism. There were in Great Britain alone, at the end of the first hundred years after the rejection of Mr. Wesley from the pulpits of the Church of England, about the same number of Wesleyan Methodists as there were members of the universal Church of Christ at the beginning of the second century. Wesleyan Methodism in the United States, on the other hand, as an organized body, has seen just seventy-five years; and yet the statistics of the apostolic church, taken as before at the opening of the second century of the christian era, are contained nearly four times within the dividend furnished by its numbers. Wesleyan Methodism, as a whole, English, American, and missionary, as it now appears in the world, could suffer the number of the first century apostolic church to be taken out of its statistics five times successively, and then leave as many as that church did itself contain with which to begin the triumphs of a second century!

Digitized by Google

If we now look at England for a moment—that same England whose religious teachers rejected the itinerant Wesley—we learn that, according to the statistics of the Registrar-General, only one-third of its present population are in any way connected with the established order. The active, living, pious members of that body, which admits communicants without personal experience of any conscious work of grace—members merely born and bred within its pale—must be very few indeed; and these, with every other member, are divided in thought, feeling, and action, in sentiment and in sympathies, into several discordant parties. The Church of England, in fact, is now nothing but a sect with certain privileges granted it by law; and these privileges cannot long stand. With two-thirds of the population of the island opposed to their continuance; with an organized party, headed by some of the strongest men in England, seeking their abolition, they must soon give way; and this is so plain upon the surface of society in that country, that Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Buckle, the profoundest English philosophers for a century, have made the common statement, that the English Establishment cannot survive the present generation.*

How is it, in the mean time, with the establishment founded by Mr. Wesley? Wesleyanism is nothing but a

* In a recent speech in the Town Hall, at Birmingham, Mr. John Bright, the great reformer of the House of Commons, is reported to have used the following language: "Probably many persons in this meeting are not aware of the fact, that, in England, only a third of the people have any connection whatever, according to the statistics of the Registrar-General, with the Established Church." The substance of the whole speech was, that a minority could not long govern the majority, even under a government like that of England. The dissenting force, he thought, was already too powerful, and would soon become too enlightened, to submit to live only for the benefit of a portion of the population not amounting to more than half of their own number.

Digitized by Google

lerate Episcopalianism, founded, not upon tradition, but on a felt experience of regeneration; it is Episcopalianism made alive; for though in England it has not the episcopal form of constitution, it feels itself to be but a revival within and around the national organization; and this Wesleyanism, now more flourishing than at any former period of its history, and becoming every day stronger in moral influence, will stand entire amidst the ruins of the Church of England. The vital elements of that church, after the general dissolution, will constitute a small but scattered population, with no patronage, or sufficient power to collect them into parishes; the worldly part of the establishment will fall back into the world to which they properly belong; and then will come the harvest-day of Wesleyan Methodism in England. Its living piety will attract to itself, not all at once but gradually, the disintegrated constituents of the spiritual portion of the fallen denomination; for they will see in Methodism, not only the practical religion which they themselves possess, but every kindly sympathy toward the people from whom Wesleyanism is but a partial and perhaps temporary separation, with not a particle of the repulsiveness of dissent; and the perfect organization of the Wesleyan body, as complete as that of the old establishment itself, will be ready to gather in the scattered members of the church, and give them a home providentially fitted up for them by one, who, in the midst of all his persecutions and sufferings, never left them. But the reader may carry out these suggestions to his own satisfaction. These, and greater than these results, are shadowed forth by the present religious condition of Great Britain. The plan of this chapter, however, is to deal only with well-settled facts; and it is a fact, whatever may be promised or foreboded by it, that Wesleyan Methodism is at this moment the strongest and most prosperous body of living christians in Great Britain, while the British Church, divided and subdivided against itself, and more than ever

Digitized by Google

distracted since it shut out the influence and labors of Mr. Wesley, is tottering to its dissolution.*

Wesleyan Methodism is still stronger, in comparison with the oldest of the denominations, in the United States. In the foregoing tabular view no account has been taken of several of the minor associations, which, though nominally separated from the parent body by some secular peculiarity, are one with it in tracing their existence, and institutions, and spirit to Mr. Wesley. The most recent historian of Methodism has given to the American branch of it a membership of about two millions; and this, by the usual rule of reckoning three hearers to a member, would set off to it about one-third of the entire population of this country. In other words, Methodism has about the same proportion of our inhabitants as the English Church has of the inhabitants of England, and about twice as many, in comparison, as that Church has of the entire population of Great Britain. If numbers, therefore, as in the mother country, or plurality, as was once the rule in our own, could make a state establishment, then Methodism would be, at this hour, the national religion of the United States. If compared with Episcopalianism and Congregationalism, the two oldest and the two original Protestant religions of Ame-

* There is nothing fanciful in this description of the precarious condition of the Church of England. The leading journals of Great Britain have been teeming, for some years back, with worse anticipations than I have ventured here to copy. It is well known that two years ago (1857), there was a bill in parliament for the abolition of the whole tything system; every man was to be left free to pay or not to pay for any sort of preaching; and by the passage of this bill, the Church of England would have no better foundation than any other sect. What is more, the bill actually passed the House of Commons; it was defeated in the House of Lords; the committee of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies, however, have reintroduced the subject; and they are resolved to press it, in every form and by every means, till success shall crown their effort. The facts of the case have been largely stated in the newspapers of England and of the United States, and need no further reference for their authentication.

Digitized by Google

rica, it would rise to a still higher right to precedence. When Methodism appeared in the southern colonies of the present confederacy, under the auspices of a few unknown missionaries sent out by Mr. Wesley, Episcopalianism was the prevailing religion there; and in some of the colonies it was the established order as in England. Now, there are in all the United States, according to the last federal census, *eighty-nine thousand three hundred and fifty-nine* of this denomination against the *two millions* of Wesleyan Methodists. This is no more than saying, that the entire body of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, bishops, priests and communicants, might be taken *twenty-two* times from the membership of American Methodism, and yet leave a remainder almost as large as the entire membership of the Unitarian denomination of this country. According to the same census, also, there was in the Orthodox Congregational societies, once the established order in New England, in all the States and Territories, a membership of *one hundred and seventy-seven thousand, six hundred and sixty-eight*, a number that might be taken *ten* times out of the membership of American Methodism, and still leave nearly *three* times as many as compose the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. Such comparisons, however, carry but little meaning with them. To make any appreciable comparison between Methodism in America and these old and once legally established churches, it would be necessary, in fact, to resort to other modes of calculation; for the truth is, as the figures show, that, omitting entirely the body of the statistics of Wesleyan Methodism in the United States, the *addition* made to it in this country during the last year is greater by several thousand than the latest officially acknowledged *membership* of either of these ancestral and still respectable denominations. The increase of these two bodies, on the other hand, is certainly rather doubtful. According to the most unexceptional authority, Orthodox Congrega-

Digitized by Google

tionalism has been for some years declining in this country. In an annual statement, made in the year 1858, that denomination makes the following declaration: "In New England, our only stronghold, we cannot expect to be much stronger than we are now. The life and enterprise of many of our churches are going out from us."[7] In another place of the same annual it is stated: "The membership in New England is less by the returns this year than last, and last than the year before."[8] This is certainly an unwelcome state of things for a religious body once the only church, and that established and defended by civil and penal statutes, in one of the most enlightened and important portions of our land; but

[7] Congregational Year Book for 1858, p. 14.

[8] Congregational Year Book for 1858, p. 87. The writer of this general statement would infer, however, that the actual number of Congregationalists, notwithstanding these diminishing returns, is greater than at any time before; but he is only conjecturing in making this announcement; for the reports of the churches do not show it; and then the groundwork of his hypothesis conveys the disheartening idea, that all the statistics of his denomination have long been entirely beyond the facts: "The discrepancy," he says (Congregational Year Book for 1858, p. 88), is easily accounted for, when it is known that for the last two years, especially the last, there have been more thorough revisions of Church records than perhaps ever before, and the dropping of the names of members long since removed and lost sight of." The writer then gives some examples of this work of revision and reduction: "One church," he says, "reported a membership, in 1856, of about *four hundred and fifty*, and received *more* than were removed during the ensuing year, but in 1857 reported only *eighty!* Others were cut down by *tens*, others, by *twenties*, or *fifties*. And this is a work *long since needed*. It is time our church records were thoroughly revised, and our real living membership ascertained, no matter how low the figure, if it be truthful." The truth, however, if these are characteristic facts, would certainly be alarming to Congregationalism in this country; for if the above be the *ratio* of the reported excess over the actual statistics of the denomination, the facts would give them only from fifty to a hundred thousand members on the continent. It has long been my opinion that Congregationalism is gradually wasting away among us; but I had not supposed its condition and prospects so perfectly discouraging!

Digitized by Google

the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States is enjoying only a moderate success; and the time cannot be distant when both these denominations may sink in self-consciousness to the level of a low, but not abject position. They have age, and reputation, and talents, and learning, and piety, and some zeal to preserve them against a dissolution like that impending over the Church of England. Without any doubt, however, they have about reached their limits; they have never been able to make their systems popular in this country; and the consequence is, that Methodism, which is the people's religion in a land where the people govern, is destined to surpass them both, in the time to come, far beyond all former precedent. He who doubts this declaration, with the census tables of the nation and the minutes of the three Churches in his hands, would doubt the propositions of mathematics.*

It is not only true, however, that success is no argument for truth, but it is equally true, that numbers are not always the measure of moral power. The three hundred Hebrews, who followed the call of Gideon, laid the myriads of the enemy at their feet. Saul, with all his armies, retired before a host, which fell back before the single hand of David. Methodism may have her millions, but some of the smallest of the religious bodies, like that of the Episcopalians or Congregationalists, for example, may control the country and the age, notwithstanding the paucity of their numbers. It is notorious, as has been seen, that Methodism began its career

* It must not be overlooked that I have taken the statistics of Congregationalism from the census of 1850; but if the authority above quoted (Congregational Year Book for 1858) is to be relied on, the returns of that year might be greater than the facts of the present; for it is since 1850 that the decrease in the denomination has been particularly noticed; and yet I have followed the latest returns of Methodism in the United States, for the obvious reason, that instead of being a retrograding or even stationary movement, its progress is accelerating, the last year being of all the most triumphant.

Digitized by Google

among the poorer classes; and, as wealth is always power, it may be that either of the above inconsiderable denominations may possess more of this material force, than this countless multitude of improvident and needy Methodists. Such a thing, it is clear, is not only possible, but considering all the known facts of the case, would seem even probable. Whatever may be the premises, however, history does not sustain the conclusion. The very fact that Methodism began among the working classes has turned out to be greatly to the advantage of its pecuniary prosperity. Labor, the labor of these working Methodists, was found to be not only very useful in preserving them from idle speculations, and in maintaining the healthfulness of their moral feelings, and so making them a more stable and pious people, for the very reason of their industrious habits, but it has as effectually contributed to the production of wealth among them. Had Methodism been suffered to go forward with its work among the upper classes in Great Britain, and in the United States, with no opposition from Episcopalian or Congregational establishments, it might have drawn many of the high and great into its embrace, but it would have received their prejudices and loose habits with them; and at this hour, when those who were then wealthy and noble are now, in their descendants, very largely poor and degraded, it might have gone down with them to their present level. The same argument would have force, with some modification for the better, had Methodism taken its position solely or mainly among the gentry. But neither of these arrangements was within the order of divine Providence. God sent Methodism, as he had before sent Christianity in its origin, to the industrious multitude, who, by its influence upon them, have become the active and productive classes of the present generation. Their religion made them sober, provident, and frugal, as their necessities had made them not afraid of labor. It is a remark of Dr. Channing, that he had "great faith in hard work;" and so had Methodism at the

Digitized by Google

beginning of her history. This hard work of her working masses, coupled with the other virtues derived from their methodistic training, has now made them the most successful business people of this country. It may not be generally understood; but Methodism is at this time, not only very numerous, but very wealthy, in almost every quarter of the world. Their wealth is more evenly distributed among them, than is the case with some denominations, and may thus make a slighter impression upon a person indulging a passing observation on them. This, however, is as it should be; and it arises from the fact that the members, being characteristically practical and hard-working men, have not depended upon speculation, but upon their personal exertions. They are now, without any doubt, the most wealthy denomination in this country. Their Church property has been officially reported to be worth more than that of any other religious body in the United States. They are at work, hard at work, with their native industry and energy, in agriculture, in commerce, in manufactures, in ship-building, in every department of human labor. On the sea and on the land; on the surface of the earth and within its rich interior; everywhere, and in everything that promises good returns—in gold fields, in silver mines, in the deep gorges where they cut lead out of the hill-sides, among the copper mountains—they are plying the implements of their hundred-handed industry. Methodism, in a word, humble as it was at first, is the long-fabled but now real and powerful working Briareus of the present generation; it has a hand on every operation of our country and our age; and it is felt, and will be felt, as a money-using and money-gathering force, from the centre to the circumference of every proper and profitable undertaking. It is not only in the manifold and inferior operations of labor, that the Methodists are at work, but equally in the heaviest and most magnificent enterprises of material industry. It is a singular fact, indeed, as if the spirit of Methodism prompted to designs

Digitized by Google

in proportion to its own dimensions, that some of the largest mechanical achievements of the day have been planned and executed by its members. The largest ship ever built on this side of the Atlantic was designed and constructed by a Methodist. The largest publishing establishment in the United States, perhaps, excepting the one owned directly by the denomination, is the property of other Methodists. In every department of handicraft, in fact, in all the joint labors of the muscles and the mind, Methodism stands higher, as it would seem, than any other order of religious people in this nation. From every quarter, wealth is flowing steadily into the coffers of her membership; and, therefore, whatever its circumstances may have been at the instauration of this religious movement, it now has the double advantage, if rightly improved, of a large population, and of great wealth.

Numbers and wealth, however, do not complete the catalogue of constituent elements, that go in to the formation of a large social influence. Numbers are useful in many ways, and we are told by the prince of dramatists that,

> "Where gold goes before, all ways lie open;"

but the same old bard of nature tells us also

> "That the ass bears gold,
> To groan and sweat under the business,
> Either led or driven as we may point the way."

It might be true, therefore, that Methodism, with all her affluence, is only the burden-bearer, without intelligence to give proper direction to its course. Indeed, it may as well be said at once, that such has been the judgment passed upon it by some, who have acknowledged the greatness of its dimensions and its general wealth. The cry of illiteracy began in England, in the very days of Mr. Wesley, not because the individuals who founded and supported the system there were not highly educated men; for they were always con-

Digitized by Google

fessed to be learned and informed to the very first degree; but because they were driven out of the settled parishes of the kingdom and compelled to make their ministrations to the common people. From England, the imputation passed over with the Methodists to this continent; and here they found a state of things well adapted to fix still deeper this reproach upon them. They were, in general, as I have before confessed —for there is nothing gained by a denial or concealment of the truth—of the every day working portion of the population; their religious teachers, with many signal exceptions, though deeply-experienced in religion, were either quite illiterate or moderately educated persons; and they were then placed in immediate comparison and competition with the established denominations of the country, who had long shared the advantages of our republican system of education, and whose ministers were always well disciplined in intellectual culture, and oftentimes really eminent for their attainments. It was a sort of common law, in fact, with these old denominations, that no man was fit to be a preacher, unless he had passed through a college; and it was also maintained very widely, both among Episcopalians and Congregationalists, that if a person had passed through the studies of a college, he was a suitable candidate for the pulpit, without personal piety, and, what was worse, without moral character.[10]

[10] This is a charge so severe that I feel bound to sustain it by testimony, not only unimpeachable, but disinterested; and the reader is therefore directed to the history of the settlement of the Rev. Obadiah Parsons, in 1784, in the town of Lynn, Massachusetts, when it was well known that he had just *escaped* from a sham examination at Gloucester for licentiousness. The story is partly told, with a good deal of mercy, by Rev. Parsons Cooke, D.D. (Cooke's Centuries, pp. 208-217), in a work written mainly for the purpose, as it would seem, to rebuke Methodism! This case of Mr. Parsons, however, is only a single specimen of the universal looseness of the public mind in the United States under the administration of Episcopalian and Congregational orthodoxy, as will be seen by a general consultation

Digitized by Google

Methodism, on the other hand, started with the idea, as has been seen, that the minister was called to go into the world and preach a *felt* Gospel to mankind. Like David, he was to be able to call the people together, and then tell them "what the Lord had done for *his* soul." This was considered by the Wesleyans, on both sides of the Atlantic, as the first, great, indispensable qualification of a minister. They so explained themselves everywhere. In England, they put this experimental work of grace *before* ordination; and their opponents distorted their position into a *denial* of ordination. In New England they set this inward experience of regeneration *above* education; and this was at once distorted into a position *against* education. The preëminence thus given to a heartfelt religion, taken in connection with the fact, that the Methodists were generally, at that time, of the humbler and less educated classes in society, was color enough to give their opponents the chance of accusing them of being enemies to intellectual culture. The accusation, however, was entirely unjust. Methodism was flatly misrepresented upon that subject. Its ministers often said, I will admit, that they would rather have religion without *education*, than education without *religion;* and, in the heat of the engagement between the two parties to it, Congregationalism was undoubtedly charged with taking one of these positions, while Methodism was as strenuously charged with holding to the other. Neither of these imputations, however, was historically just. Congregationalism, with all its laxness of discipline at the time of the advent of Methodism, never taught that personal piety was of no value to a minister; and Methodism never held that intellectual cultivation was not important. Methodism, in fact, took its origin in the most learned of the English universities; its founder, and its first clerical adhe-

of the early annals of this country, and as Dr. Cooke seems rather reluctantly to admit in several places of the volume above quoted.

Digitized by Google

rents, were all graduates of that ancient seat of learning; and one of the first things undertaken by them, after they had gathered a population together by their preaching, was to erect a literary institution for their improvement. The same course was pursued by our first and leading Wesleyan missionaries in the United States. They had scarcely travelled over the whole country, before they had founded and raised a college which they intended to make of the very highest order. It was soon burnt to the ground, but rebuilt at once by the indefatigable and persistent zeal of its projectors. It was again reduced to ashes; and it was doubtful whether this ill fortune was the work of an incendiary or the special will of Providence; but, trusting again in the goodness of God, though with some discouragement of feeling, and in another locality, they and their successors went forward to project and rear another literary institution of the same high character. This time the effort was entirely successful; and, from that beginning, the denomination has proceeded till it now has educational institutions of every grade quite sufficient for the best culture of its entire population.

Wesleyan Methodism has now, in the mother country, besides its five hundred smaller schools, a Normal Training Institution at Westminster, for the preparation of teachers for its extensive educational operations; it has another of a similar character in Ireland; and it has in England two Theological Institutions, one at Didsbury, the other at Richmond, with very learned and able faculites, for the most thorough education of its ministers.[11]

[11] Kingswood School, the first of Mr. Wesley's literary institutions, was established in 1748; and it is devoted exclusively to the education of the sons of Wesleyan ministers. A similar school was founded, in 1811, at Woodhouse Grove, near Leeds. There is also a classical school at Sheffield, which, though not owned by the Wesleyan body, is a Wesleyan school, and secured to the interests of Methodism by its deed of settlement. Besides these and other institutions of the higher grade, there are numerous Wes-

Digitized by Google

In the United States, Methodism has a great abundance of schools of every degree of elevation, from the select school to the university, and generally overflowing with the children of its own population. The select schools and smaller academies are so numerous as to be beyond an exact calculation. They are literally everywhere, throughout the nation, in every State, in every Territory, manned by Methodist teachers, and filled with Methodist pupils. Of seminaries of a higher grade, employing from five to twenty-five professors, and having an annual average of students ranging from two hundred and fifty to a thousand, it now has, according to a count made from my own knowledge, a list of at least one hundred and twenty-one; and, from the geographical distribution of those counted, it is very plain, that the actual number is even greater than I have herein stated. As such statements will look to many like exaggerations, and for no other reason, I will add, that one of the above hundred and more seminaries at one time had, to my own knowledge, a *corps* of twenty-five professors, nearly every one of them liberally educated persons, and an annual catalogue of eleven hundred and fifty-six students. This was then, I believe, the largest and most flourishing institution of the kind in the United States; and, therefore, I need hardly add, that it was also the largest among the Methodists; but it was by no means so large as to stand above all comparison, for there were at that time, as there are now, about eighty similar institutions, whose plans of study were as liberal, whose faculties were as able, and whose patronage was almost as ample, as the one which has been mentioned as only *primus inter pares*. But then, still above these first-class and exceedingly popular institutions,

leyan day schools all over the kingdom, which are owned, conducted, supported and patronized by the Methodists of Great Britain. These smaller but widely scattered schools, as Dr. Porter well remarks (Compendium of Methodism, p. 103), "have contributed very largely to the general intelligence of the people."

Digitized by Google

American Methodism is reaping the educational results of at least twenty-five literary institutions of the highest grade of all, some of which are colleges of age and standing, and among which are no less than eighteen with university charters and appendages. It is one thing to have a college charter, or a university charter, and quite another to have a college, or a university; but it may be said with truth, that American Methodism has laid down for all its collegiate institutions as deep and broad a course of study as can be found in any of the colleges of this country, or of Europe; and her universities have opened with the high ambition of equalling, if not surpassing, the most noted of their predecessors. Every educated man knows how idle it is for a literary institution of any grade to base a preëminence on the antiquity of its foundation, or on the extent of its notoriety; for it is well known, that the course of study in those of no celebrity is virtually identical with those of the greatest reputation; and a severe student is always able to get about an equal amount of help, and of education, whatever be the college or university in which he may chance to study. Dartmouth, a second-class institution, for example, has sent out not only a greater man, but a larger proportion of great men, and men of thorough training, than Harvard, with all its world-wide fame. There is a great deal of loose and shallow prejudice upon this subject. The German schools look down upon those of England; the English sneer at the inferiority of the American; the older ones in America affect to ignore their juniors; while every sensible man, the world over, who has passed through a thorough discipline, knows, that there is scarcely anything to choose between the actual course of study in them.[13]

[13] Bristed (Five Years in an English University, *passim*,) wrote his two volumes for the avowed purpose of proving the inferiority of the colleges of the United States to those of England; but it is singular that the whole course of his revelations of English student-life, establishes be-

Digitized by Google

The age we live in has adopted what is substantially one common plan and platform of the higher education. Germany, England, and America have alike adopted it. Methodism has also adopted it. She has set it at work in all her colleges; and, under its direction, she has made as thorough scholars, and that in some of her least known institutions, as can be furnished from the oldest and most noted of the land. She is making no needless noise upon the subject, outside of her own limits in particular, but she is silently and steadily performing a work, in the education of her youth, which is making a rapid and perfect revolution in her literary position before the world. Her first work, from the nature of things, was to gather a people; for she certainly could not educate them before she had them; but, no sooner did she begin to count upon a population as really her own, than she commenced to put forth an energy, in the way of their educational elevation, which, as it seems to me, must appear to every candid observer as little less than wonderful.

And yet, it is not for the body of her people, only, that Methodism has been making these ample provisions in this country; for, were this the case, her membership would soon rise above and so spurn her religious teachers; but she is doing herself nearly equal honor in rearing institutions for the education of her clergy. It is well understood, in the first place, that every person entering the ranks of the travel-

yond dispute the negative of his proposition, and the Foundation Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge, has only been laughed at for his remuneration. The truth simply is, that young Bristed was the heir to an exhaustless inheritance; that he had too much money for the good of his mind while a student in this country; that his American education, consequently, gave so little satisfaction to his friends, that he had to go to Europe to make up a reasonable preparation for public life; and so, he went to England, spent five years at Cambridge in the filial duty of wasting more money, and then wrote a book, abusing the institutions of his native land, to show himself, not only a gentleman, but a scholar!

Digitized by Google

ing ministry of Methodism in America has to pass through a four-years' course of religious and literary training while actually engaged in preaching; and this rule, which knows no exceptions, is enforced as rigidly upon graduates of college, as upon persons of merely common school or academical education. Beyond this universal scheme of ministerial preparation, there are seven or eight universities among the American Methodists, which have Theological Departments connected with them; and then, above these also, they have a Biblical Institute of deserved eminence and success, at the capital of New Hampshire, and another of the same character, whose property is now worth not far from half a million of dollars, in the State of Illinois, near Chicago. There is a project on foot, at this time, to establish a third somewhere beyond the Rocky Mountains. The Biblical seminaries already instituted have faculties of real ability, and of profound and varied scholarship; they are inviting hundreds of young men, from every walk of life, to make a more ample preparation for the labors and responsibilities of the Christian pulpit; and these hundreds are pouring out, in an ever-widening current, to swell the ranks and elevate the character and reputation of the ministry of their denomination.

There never was a time, however, as their success will show, when the heralds of Methodism did not possess the gifts, graces, and acquisitions necessary to a most efficient discharge of their ministerial duties; they have always been able to meet the representatives of the most thoroughly educated denominations, in any sort of theological engagement, and to retire from the field, certainly with advantage, if not with triumph; they have pushed their way along, in spite of all the clamor in relation to their want of learning, routing from the arena those who have made the charge, or outstripping them immeasurably in the race of victory; they have given a glorious demonstration to the world, that a vital and heart-felt experience of the work of regeneration, with a

Digitized by Google

reasonable ability of speech, is far better than mere intellectual culture; but they are now adding to this original advantage, from which they do not swerve, that for which their opponents in this country and in Europe made their chief claim of ministerial superiority; and the result is, that, under the influence of both these advantages united, the ministry of Methodism, on both sides of the Atlantic, will soon be the most thoroughly cultivated, as they have always been the most successful, ministry of modern times.

The two other liberal professions, however, have not been neglected. In England, Methodism has no institutions, or department, for the education of lawyers and physicians; the laws of the country place obstacles in the path of non-episcopal foundations of this character; but, in the United States, the denomination has several of these appendages to its universities. They are to be found chiefly in the southern and western States, where Methodism began with the settlement of the country, and where its wealth and general standing are consequently much superior to what they are in the older portions of the Union. Such schools, however, with all the wealth and influence of the denomination thrown around them, can not outrun the natural conditions of their growth. They must have time for their development and for the laying down of a basis for a wide and permanent reputation. The medical schools of Methodism have done better, as a general thing, than her law schools. Some of them, indeed, like that at Cincinnati, which is a branch of the Wesleyan University of Ohio, and like the one at Indianapolis, which is a branch of the Indiana Asbury University, have already taken a marked position among the medical institutions of the country. Enough has been done, in fact, in both law and medicine, to make a demonstration of the power of a denomination, in these departments of education, which, above all other religious bodies, with the single exception of the Catholics, can concentrate any measure of its force to any

Digitized by Google

point selected by it for a special undertaking; and American Methodism has now more schools of this kind, though as yet young and little known, but healthy and vigorous in their early promise, and destined to rise to a high place of honor and renown, than either of the oldest and ablest denominations of the country.

To show still further, however, that Methodism the world over, and particularly in the United States, is not the unconscious burden-bearer of its uncounted gold, but is an intellectual and far-seeing force, it may be added at this point, that, in Europe and in America, it has establishments for the publication of newspapers, monthly and quarterly periodicals, and for the manufacture of books, which, even among the largest houses, must be looked upon as the leaders of their class. There is one in London, founded at an early time, which may be said to have set a pattern to Great Britain, and to all Europe, in the great work of making religious reading cheap for the general benefit of mankind. There has been much said of late upon this interesting theme; it has been often presented, in the great quarterlies of both hemispheres, as an object to be attained, if not a question to be solved; but it is a historical fact, that English Methodism attained the object, and solved the question, years before it began to be discussed by any other portion of the world; and the consequence is, that the world has now only just roused up to a social duty, in which Methodism has led the way, and in the performance of which she yet wears the palm. The idea and the enterprise are English; and the honors of invention should be willingly given where they so properly belong; but the greatest development and widest application of the theory of cheap publications for popular circulation have been realized among the Methodists of the United States. It is not possible here to give the statistics of their publishing establishments. It is enough to say, in this place, that they have one of these institutions at New

Digitized by Google

York, another at Cincinnati, a third at Nashville, with branches at Boston, Auburn, Pittsburg, Chicago, Richmond, St. Louis, Charleston, San Francisco, Raleigh, New Orleans, Memphis, Galveston, and Salem, in the new State of Oregon, besides depositories and other public provisions for the sale of books in almost every leading city of the United States. Every traveling minister, also, is an official and accredited agent of these establishments; he is expected to keep an assortment of their publications at his residence, or near him, and under his control, for the convenience of his people and of the general public; and the consequent sale and distribution of their works reach an annual list, which, to those of my readers who have taken no pains to learn the intellectual activity of this denomination, will seem to be incredible. The whole sum may be imagined from the fact, which has been stated by the publishers themselves, that the sales at the New York house alone, from the size of a tract to a volume costing fifteen dollars, averages the daily amount of about twenty thousand distinct publications. The entire periodical force of Methodism in the United States presents an aggregate of two quarterlies, two monthlies, and twenty weekly sheets, of which two are in the German language. Methodism in England, according to its population, is almost equally active in these intellectual operations. It must be regarded as quite notable, indeed, that that very people which was only a little time ago reproached for its illiteracy, now presents the anomaly of owning and carrying on, not only the largest denominational publishing house in the world, but a greater number of them than any other denomination. It publishes also the most widely circulating religious quarterly in the world. Its leading weekly newspaper, the Christian Advocate and Journal, is, for the same reason, the banner religious weekly of the world, there being no other having its extent of circulation; and the combined circulation of its American and European periodicals has

Digitized by Google

nothing like a parallel, among purely religious periodicals, in the annals of mankind. At this moment, so far from its being regarded by outside observers as an illiterate class of people, Methodism now stands in the front rank of religious bodies for its literary operations, and is even looked to as an example for the oldest and most cultivated denomination: "No other religious body in this country," says a recent issue of the New York Evangelist, "can present, we believe, so various and extensive a collection of denominational *literature* as the Methodist Church. We bid them God-speed in the work in which they are engaged, and would only express the *hope*, that kindred churches of our Protestant faith may be incited by their example." The New York Observer, also, another disinterested witness, is satisfied that the progress of Methodism, "in the intellectual improvement of the people, is one of the signs of the times."

The truth is, in fact, that Methodism itself is one of the signs of the times. When it is considered that it began under a cloud; that it was turned out of doors, from the day of its birth, by all the world; that, the moment it began to grow and make itself felt in society, it was persecuted by the established orders on both sides of the Atlantic; and that it now stands, in spite of all these discouragements, first in *numbers*, first in *labors*, first in *wealth*, first in the *ratio* of its *progress*, and first in the magnitude and success of its *educational and literary establishments*, it must strike the most superficial and the most profound observer as something worthy of careful study on the part of every person, who would comprehend the facts of existing history, or look forward with any foresight to the unwritten histories of the ages yet to come.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

RANK AND POWER OF ENGLISH METHODISM.

In England, where Methodism was so promptly misapprehended and rejected, it soon began to recover its position, and now stands first, in the respect shown it by high and low, among the non-episcopal denominations of that country. Its founder, and the most eloquent and able of his helpers, were not only turned out of all the pulpits of Great Britain, but looked upon with suspicion, and often mobbed by the common people. There was a time, indeed, when it was at the risk of their lives, in every part of England, that the heralds of the new cause proceeded to their appointments; wherever they approached a town, the event was hailed by a general commotion of the populace; and they were commonly met upon the road, and escorted through the streets, by a rabble of men and boys amounting oftentimes to hundreds. If they attempted to preach, they were arrested for a misdemeanor; they were dragged before some magistrate, whose judgment had been made out beforehand; old laws, which had lain dead within the statute-books for generations, were raked up and galvanized into full life and vigor; the priest of the parish sometimes openly, and almost always privately, joined in the hue and cry against them; every epithet of reproach and of contempt, enthusiast, mad-cap, Jacobite, and Jesuit, was thrown into circulation and hurled upon them; and everything was done, which could be devised by the higher or executed by the lower orders, to stop the progress of this novel fanaticism, and to stamp the memory of it with everlasting infamy. The work, however, went forward. It pro-

Digitized by Google

ceeded the faster, it is probable, for the very reason of this universal hubbub. It received notoriety without an effort of its own; and this, as usual, was the first step to fame. Methodism passed through the fiery ordeal prepared for it by other hands and came out with a reputation all the better for the trials it had undergone. It proved itself to be a rational and sober movement, founded on the plainest declarations of the Bible, and worthy of encouragement from every person having a regard to the substance, rather than to the shadow, of our religion. Opposition remained; ridicule, and misrepresentation, and reproach remained; but the law, the rabble, and the tumult were gradually laid aside; and it was not long before it had nothing worse to meet, than an occasional book, or pamphlet, or review article, or newspaper column, or virulent philippic from some irritated clergyman of the national Church, while its march was still forever onward.

The next thing, it began to be said, that Wesley was certainly a remarkable man; his followers began to be regarded as truly pious people; the claims of the Wesleyan ministry to an honorable position for scholarship, in addition to the universal reputation for pulpit eloquence, began to be admitted; and it was soon found, indeed, that both ministers and people were only a collection of societies, drawn together for the practice and propagation of real piety. Their *object* was pronounced respectable. They were themselves, however, not admitted to good fellowship without a further probation. Time passed on; the societies increased and multiplied; they made early and strenuous efforts at the work of self-elevation; and it was next discovered, at a time when the British Government had a service to be performed requiring talents and acquirements found only in occasional instances in any country, that the most learned man of his generation, the man they must have for the execution of their purpose, was a Methodist.

Digitized by Google

The current of things still moved forward; the Wesleyan preachers kept on studying their books, proclaiming their gospel, and educating and lifting up their people; and then it was gradually found out, that Methodism was not a dissenting denomination, but friendly to the Christian religion whether within or outside the pale of the Church of England. But the cause did not stop to celebrate this period of its progress; it only went directly onward with its work; it labored with growing numbers and multiplying instrumentalities; every year added to its dimensions and its capabilities; every day gave it some new advantage; and it was finally believed, on the part of the leading minds of the kingdom, both in Church and State, that it was due to Methodism to respect it for what it had accomplished among the people, and to look to it as the ally of the government in all efforts for the education and improvement of the general populace of Great Britain. The end was, Methodism was acknowledged, recognized and respected by the very classes by whom it had been originally rejected; men of the highest credit began to be seen on the Wesleyan platforms, either as presiding officers, or as speakers; lords and ladies mingled with the masses of its population to listen to some favorite preacher; and now, at the time of this writing, there is no body of people in the three realms which has a higher *religious* rank, or greater religious *power*, than that which professes to be the work of the once rejected Wesley.

If the half a million of Methodists stood alone in England, with all the rest of the population one against them, they might be able to stand, under the present constitution and statutes of the empire, in their religious character, in spite of this opposition; for their reputation for true piety and for active benevolence would save them the respect even of their enemies; and then they would be able to hold their position with a still firmer foot in consequence of their literary achievements.

Digitized by Google

English Methodism has been singularly literary from its very origin. The father of John Wesley was a man of very profound learning; and he was one of the three projectors and proprietors of the first literary periodical in the English language. The Athenian Mercury, established in 1691, owned and edited by Samuel Wesley, Richard Sault, and John Dunton, preceded the Spectator by nearly twenty years, and received contributions, not only from the three proprietors, but from the first English writers of its day, including such men as Tate, Richardson, Pope and Swift. Pope was a particular friend to Mr. Samuel Wesley; and there is a letter still extant, in which he commends him to Swift as a gentleman of undoubted merit: "I call him, what he is, a learned man," says Pope; and the poet informs his correspondent that Bolingbroke was also Mr. Wesley's friend. It was Mr. Wesley's literary character, rather than his clerical and religious, which commended him to the notice of these classic men; and it cannot be denied, that, whatever may be now thought of his productions, which are scarcely known on this side of the Atlantic, they are certainly numerous enough to make a reputation for literary industry worthy of regard. Some of his works, too, such as his Commentary on the Book of Job, and his Dissertation on the Vowel Points of the Hebrew Language, are yet noted for their learning; while his Hymn to the Creator, written in the name of Eupolis, one of the greatest of the Greek comic poets, is so entirely in the spirit and power of the old Attic muse, as to have passed for a genuine translation, even with the learned men of England, for many years; and it is so replete with poetic genius, that it received an unusual degree of eulogy from the English critics. "The character of the Platonist," says Clarke, a competent judge, "is wonderfully preserved throughout the whole; the conceptions are all worthy of the subject; the Grecian history and mythology are woven through it with exquisite art; and

Digitized by Google

it is so like a finished work from the highest cultivated Greek muse, that I receive the evidence of my reason and research with regret, when it assures me that this *inimitable* hymn was the production of the Isle-poet of Axholm." Though this panegyric must be regarded as altogether too unmeasured, the idea of the poem is undoubtedly very fine; but the versification is not on a level with the theme. It must be admitted, however, that the father of the founder of Methodism was a person of a high literary position, and of no little talent, among the classic writers of his age.[1]

That the mother of John Wesley was a woman of extraordinary intellect, of wide and accurate cultivation, and of a highly literary turn of mind, is evident from every fact that is known about her. The daughter of Samuel Annesley, LL.D., an English clergyman of great learning, she was so proficient in every department of knowledge, and possessed so powerful a genius, that, before she was thirteen years of age, she examined the entire controversy between the Nonconformists and the regulars of the Church of England. The result of the investigation was that she forsook the principles of her father, without opposition from him, however, and went over to the established order. No sooner had she married Samuel Wesley, and begun to have a family around her, than she displayed a depth of philosophy, in the matter of domestic education, which has anticipated the supposed discoveries of the present generation of educators. Her knowledge of literature and science was not only respectable but extensive.

[1] It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of this poem, that even after Dr. Adam Clarke had proved by his own researches, and by the emphatic declaration of Professor Porson, the first Greek scholar of his age, that no such work as a Hymn to the Creator is to be found among the remaining fragments of Eupolis, the learned public were still unwilling to believe that a production so entirely classic could be the work of an English clergyman, who had sought to conceal his own merit under the guise of a translator. The poem may be seen in the Wesley Family, by Dr. Clarke, pp. 626–636.

Digitized by Google

She was the author of a sort of compendium of knowledge, which she made for the benefit of her children. This work, and all her productions of an earlier date than the 9th of February, 1709, were consumed in the fire at Epworth. She afterward wrote a treatise on the Evidences of Revealed Religion, which, considering that it preceded the great work of Bishop Butler by more than a quarter of a century, must be yet looked upon as a very remarkable production. It was a tract of about thirty duodecimo pages; and it was followed, in 1711–12, by a second edition of it, which consisted of about sixty pages quarto. She kept a diary of her religious exercises; and the record was consecrated, like all her literary labors, to the edification and instruction of her children. Her letters to the different members of her family are excellent specimens, for that period, of English composition; and they would make a most interesting and useful volume. She was in every way a woman of real intellect: "She appears to have had the advantage," says Dr. Clarke, "of a liberal education, as far as Latin, Greek and French enter into such an education. She had read much; and thus her mind was cultivated. Both logic and metaphysics had formed a part of her studies; and these acquisitions, without appearing—for she studiously endeavors to conceal them—are felt to great advantage in all her writings." [1]

Samuel Wesley, senior, died before the religious movement of his sons became established; but it is well known that he approved of the course of John and Charles so far as he lived to see and understand it; and it is equally certain that Mrs. Wesley remained, after the departure of her husband, to realize and relish the full development of Methodism in England. Samuel, the eldest son, and Mehetable, the fourth of her seven daughters, for a long time either resisted

[1] Wesley Family, p. 418.

Digitized by Google

or neglected the new order of things; but, before their deaths, they each became heartily reconciled to the enterprise of their distinguished brothers; and their individual reputations, therefore, whatever they were, and whatever they now remain, must be received and reckoned upon as component parts of the rank and power of existing Methodism.

The entire household, in fact, if we take the whole life of each of its several members, was Methodistic. It was the first Methodist family; and such a family, in their religious, literary, and social character, has scarcely a parallel on the pages of ancient or of modern history. "Such a family," says Dr. Adam Clarke, a contemporary in part and most competent judge, "I have never read of, heard of, or known; nor, since the days of Abraham and Sarah, and Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, has there ever been a family to which the human race has been more indebted."[3] It was a family of thirteen children, three of whom died in infancy; but the remaining ten lived to maturity; and there was not one of the number who did not exhibit a character which would have arrested the attention of society in the busiest period or portion of the world.

Samuel, the oldest of the children, was a gentleman of great scholarship and genius, a graduate of Oxford, for a long time principal usher of the celebrated government school at Westminster, afterward head-master of the free school at Tiverton, a powerful contributor to the periodical press of his day, and one of the first lyric poets of his literary age. Several volumes of his poems are still extant; and among them is that inimitable hymn, now seen in almost every hymn-book of our language, and in many of them without proper credit, whose initial verse—

"The morning flowers display their sweets"—

[3] Wesley Family, p. 609.

Digitized by Google

will recall to the mind of every reader a series of stanzas not to be surpassed for every excellence that can enter into a composition of this kind by anything now in print. This I assert without the fear of successful contradiction; and had the author never written a line, before or after the publication of this piece, he would have established his right to the position here assigned him. But he wrote many others; and those at all learned in hymnology will remember not a few, which have survived all the mutations of time, and now stand preëminent among productions of this class. Samuel Wesley, however, was not only a lyric but a general poet. He wrote in almost every strain and measure. He wrote satires, epigrams and epitaphs in verse. He wrote in the heroic, comic, and didactic styles with almost equal ease. He was one day found writing poetical answers to the critical labors of Dr. Watts; and on another, he was inditing metrical epistles, friendly and advisory, to Alexander Pope. He was a particular and cherished friend of Pope; he lived on the most intimate terms with Prior and even with the great Addison himself; Lord Oxford, the Mecænas of his age and country, was his patron; Lord Atterbury was his *protégé;* and his rank as a first-class *littérateur*, as a good prose writer, and as one of the most splendid of the modern lyric bards of our language, was acknowledged, not only by these masters of English composition, but by the general consent of the literary circles of his times.

Emilia Wesley was the eldest of the grown-up daughters of this family, her older sister, Susannah, having died in childhood. It was for her benefit in particular that her mother wrote the treatise, still preserved in manuscript, which John Wesley afterward indorsed with the following title: "My Mother's Conference with her Daughter." It is a work of sixty quarto pages; it was written as a sort of manual of education for the mental and moral cultivation of her child; and that child seemed, from the first, to possess

Digitized by Google

an intelligence worthy of this zeal. Dr. Clarke speaks of her as having a memory of great tenacity and readiness; he says it was "incomparable;" he particularly mentions her taste, which he declares to have been "exquisite;" he gives her "a peculiarly benevolent and even temper;" he informs us that her mind had received the benefit of the most careful and assiduous cultivation; and he adduces the testimony of her brother John to show how, in one direction at least, she had profited by this uncommon culture: "My sister Harper" —for this was her name after marriage—"was the best reader of Milton I ever heard." And this declaration carries more with it than would at first appear; for an artistic reader of so great a classic as John Milton, such as Emilia Wesley must have been, could have been nothing less than a person of great natural genius, and that disciplined to a very lofty pitch. None but a genius can read artistically, or with great excellence, the productions of a genius; and to this native ability there must always be added the results of the most perfect education. Reading is as difficult an art as speaking; and no man can be an orator, whatever be his circumstances, without the natural gift of eloquence and a most thorough cultivation. It is the same with reading; there have never been more than a very small number of readers, worthy of the name, in any generation; and when John Wesley, therefore, says of his sister Harper, that she was the best reader of Milton that he had ever heard, he at once ranks her, so far as his decision can go, with such persons as Mr. Murdoch and Mrs. Butler, who occasionally have risen up to show to the world how the thoughts and emotions of departed genius can be made again to live. But Emilia Wesley was as beautiful in person as she was remarkable for intellectual qualities. Her sister Mehetable describes her general bearing, as well as her inward character, in a familiar poetical epistle addressed to her just prior to her marriage; and when it is remembered that the Wesley family never

Digitized by Google

flattered one another, that they were quite as likely to rebuke as to eulogize, the picture thus drawn of this eldest daughter of the Epworth rector will be regarded as a good daguerreotype of a leading member of the first Methodist family. In the first stanza of the poem the writer gives to her subject the threefold excellence comprehensive of every other grace:

> "Virtue, form, and wit in thee
> Move in perfect harmony;"

and then she goes on to give a more particular analysis:

> "True wit and sprightly genius shine
> In every turn, in every line:—
> To these, O skillful Nine, annex
> The native sweetness of my sex;"

but not satisfied with this expression of her ideal, she proceeds:

> "Thy virtues and thy graces all,
> How simple, free and natural!
> Thy graceful form with pleasure I survey;
> It charms the eye—the heart—away.
> Malicious Fortune did repine
> To grant her gifts to worth like thine;"

and, after this ampler portrayal of her idea, the limner takes one more general look at the beautiful image which she had undertaken to sketch, and imparts to it the concluding stroke:

> "To all thy outward majesty and grace,
> To all the blooming features of thy face,
> To all the heavenly sweetness of thy mind,
> A noble, generous, equal soul is joined,
> By reason polished and by arts refined.
> Thy even, steady eye can see
> Dame Fortune smile or frown at thee—
> At every varied change can say—It moves not me!"

It seems, indeed, that there was strength as well as beauty

Digitized by Google

of intellect in the character of Emilia Wesley—the two qualities of greatness so seldom united in one individual; what is still more rare, this combination of excellences was equally apparent in her person, which, it appears, was striking for its "majesty and grace;" and then, in spite of all these qualities of intellect, and this magnificent beauty of form, she was endowed with that moral firmness which so marked every member of her family, and which was so necessary to the true balance and highest perfection of her character. The reader can scarcely help seeing before him, from even the little that is here recorded of this lady, the image of a person who could not fail to command the admiration of all who had the happiness to know her. Beautiful in face and figure, majestic in her address and carriage, and yet as graceful and winning as she was dignified, with an intellect of great power and compass, strengthened and refined by education, of the most exquisite sensibility and taste, and firm as a rock in her moral sentiments, could she now stand up in her native land, or upon this continent, as the best reader of the great epic of our language, as her experienced and gifted brother would justify us in supposing she might even yet be, how would she draw, as a star of the first magnitude, the most brilliant and intelligent of our cultivated age, could she commit herself to such a labor, to sit in rapt silence at her public or private readings! But she was simply a private lady, and for the greater part of her long life a widow, who, as a hearty recipient of the doctrines and discipline of her honored brother, is to be regarded only as an attractive member of the first Methodist family.

The next of the daughters of this family was Susannah, the second of that name, the first having died in infancy, as has been mentioned, and, though she had the misfortune to marry a wealthy and tyrannical debauchee, whom her mother pronounced to be a man "little inferior to the apostate angels in wickedness," she gave ample evidence, in her childhood days,

Digitized by Google

and in the interims of her womanly and almost perpetual grief, that her mind was of that high order which characterized her kindred. True genius is always spurred by misfortune, so long as it is supportable; but when the burden of trouble becomes too excessive for mortal strength, the heart breaks down, and all the fine mental qualities are crushed. This is particularly true of woman, who, as the vine that entwines itself around the oak, seeks naturally for an object in which to trust; and how many are they, the daughters of affliction as well as light, sensitive, timid, confiding, whose lives would otherwise have been wreaths of beauty around the pillars of society, have been torn from their native soil, or blasted in the first flowering of their superior life, by the insufferable woes of domestic wretchedness! This was the history of John Wesley's second sister. With a remarkably attractive personal appearance, such as would most powerfully rouse the passion of a refined and wealthy libertine, and with a mind and heart and outward bearing, which should have exalted him from the deep of sensuality to the loftiest pitch of human excellence, with the blood of all the Wesleys throbbing in her arteries, and in spite of the imperial independence and spirit of that blood, she had no sooner put on the name of Ellison, her unworthy husband, than her nature gave way, surrendering itself to a sorrow which knows no healing, and which makes every true woman feel that she cannot desire to live. She was a lady of great mental strength; she was witty, playful, and even facetious in her natural disposition; there was a vein of romance running like a golden thread through her character; it ought to have been her destiny, according to the evident designs of nature, to throw upon the common life of that serious and earnest family a perpetual sunshine of innocent and profitable hilarity; but alas! it was her fortune to begin her separate existence under circumstances which utterly paralyzed her power, and sealed up the sources of her intellectual enjoyment, leaving to her no

Digitized by Google

occupation but to weep. That stream of happiness, which came gushing from her overflowing heart, and made a perpetual verdure and a universal joy, was dried at the fountain-head; and her life, which should have been a life productive of the works of real genius, which should have made rich and varied contributions to the literature of her age and language, was broken under the iron sway of a man, who saw no other value in a woman than that looked for by the eye of lust.

The third daughter of this remarkable household was Mary Wesley, whom Dr. Clarke mentions as the favorite of her father's family. Though somewhat damaged in her form, by a childhood sickness and some carelessness of her nurse, she was yet surpassingly beautiful in person, brilliant in her countenance, and exceedingly graceful and attractive in her manners. "Her face," says Clarke, "was exquisitely beautiful;" and that, according to the same testimony, "was a fair and very legible index to a mind and disposition almost angelic." Her sister Hetty, who has already been quoted, and who, as Clarke says, was "no mean judge of worth," always wrote of her as "one of the most exalted of human characters." All that need be said of her intellectual cultivation is, that she was the daughter of Susannah Wesley, the most skillful educator of her age. But Mary died in early womanhood in becoming the mother of her first child. Though sharing largely in the common talents of her kindred, she lived not to give public proof of her ability; but her portrait has been sketched by the poetical biographer of her family. Photography itself could scarcely give us a better idea of her person, which, from the causes already stated, must have been under the ordinary size, but singularly engaging:

> "Pleasing thy face and form, though heaven confined
> To scanty limits thy exalted mind.
> Witness thy brow serene, benignent, clear,
> That none could doubt transcendent truth dwelt there;
> Witness the taintless luster of thy skin,

Digitized by Google

Pure emblem of the purer soul within:
That soul, which, tender, unassuming, mild,
Through jetty eyes with tranquil sweetness smiled.
But ah! could fancy paint, or language speak,
The roseate beauties of thy lip and cheek,
Where nature's pencil, leaving art no room,
Touched to a miracle the vernal bloom!
Lost though thou art, in Stella's deathless line
Thy face immortal as thy fame shall shine!"

But Mary Wesley was not a woman of mere wit and beauty. Her heart was as remarkable as her head. Her moral nature, like that of her father and mother, and of every one of her brothers and sisters, was her glory and her strength. The truthful pen, upon which I have already drawn so largely, presents us a perfect image of her moral and mental character:

"To soundest prudence, life's unerring guide,
To love sincere, religion without pride;
To friendship perfect in a female mind
Which I can never hope again to find;
To mirth, the balm of care, from lightness free,
Unblemished faith, unwearied industry;
To every charm and grace combined in you,
Sister and friend—a long and last *adieu!*"

The interest of these members of the Wesley family draws me into greater length than I intended; and I introduce the next in order, Mehetable Wesley, otherwise known by her *noms de plume* of Stella and Granville, with the foreboding that the wished for brevity will be still less possible in her case, for she is certainly one of the most striking characters, not only of that family, but of her literary age. She was remarkable from her earliest childhood; for when she was but eight years old, she was so familiar with the Greek, that she could read the Testament in that classic language; and, at the dawn of womanhood, she was not only a lady of

Digitized by Google

great personal attractions, but a poet of British reputation, and a scholar among the learned. She was a great reader of the Greek and Roman classics; and she formed her style, both in prose and verse, upon those acknowledged models. With less of the purely romantic in her composition than was possessed by her sister Susannah, she had even more wit, more humor, more mirthfulness; she carried sunshine wherever she chanced to go; her cheeks were dimpled, her lips were wreathed, with almost a perpetual smile; and her heart seemed to beat, or bound, with the rapturous emotions of a continual joy. In the midst of all this buoyancy of temper, there was that depth of thought, of sentiment, of purpose, so characteristic of every member of this family. This latter trait gave the greater charm to her transcendent beauty, which, during her girlhood, must have been equal to any thing at that time known in England. It was so remarkable, at all events, as to be noticed in the literary productions of her day. In one, it is said of her: "Mr. Highman, who knew her when she was young, told me she was *very handsome*;" and in another, there is a poetical portrait of her person, as well as of her mind and heart, which may be fully trusted as coming from a source entirely independent of her family. She is called in this piece Granvilla, probably from some romantic incident of her life; and the sketch was drawn, not to obtain her favor, but to repay her for the influence of her genius upon the writer, and to promote her merit:

"Fain would my grateful muse a trophy raise
Devoted to Granvilla's lasting praise;
But from what topic shall her task begin?
From outward charms? Or richer stores within?
'T were difficult with portrait just to trace
The blooming beauties of her lovely face:
The roseate bloom that blushes on her cheek,
Her eyes whence rays of pointed lightning break;
Each brow the bow of Cupid, whence her darts

Digitized by Google

With certain archery strike unguarded hearts;
Her lips, that with a rubied tincture glow,
Soft as the soothing sounds which from them flow."

This, without doubt, was intended to present the material outlines of a most radiant woman; and the readers of the magazine, in which it is still found, must have understood it so; but they could not fail, at the same time, to find themselves yet more deeply interested in the poet's description of her intellectual worth:

"But O! what words, what numbers shall I find,
To express the boundless treasures of her *mind*,
Where wit and judgment spread their copious mines,
And every grace and every virtue shines!"

Her poetical powers are set forth in still more glowing strains:

"O nymph! when you assume the muse's lyre,
What thoughts you quicken and what joys inspire!
Pale Melancholy wears a cheerful mien,
Grief smiles, and raging passions grow serene!
If themes sublime, of import grand, you try,
You lift the attentive spirit to the sky:
Or, change the strain, and sporting subjects choose,
Our softening souls obey the powerful muse.
Yet 'tis, Granvilla, not thy smallest praise
That no indecent thought profanes thy lays;
Like thy own breast, thy style from taint is free,
Censure may pry, but can no blemish see."

These lines, and the entire poem from which I have extracted them, were sent by Miss Wesley to the Gentleman's Magazine for publication; but the author of them, who signed himself Sylvius, as if he had been inspired with a truly pastoral admiration of his favorite, complains to her, in a succeeding number, in a strain as full of feeling as it is of wit:

Digitized by Google

"Allowed by bright Granville to peruse
The sprightly labors of her charming muse,
Enraptured by her wit's inspiring rays,
I chanted ready numbers to her praise:
She, pleased, my unpremeditated lines
To the recording magazine consigns:—
But would you be to best advantage known,
Print not *my verses*, fairest, but YOUR OWN!"

The advice here given, however, was but rarely followed. The compositions of this lady were found in the Poetical Register, in the Christian Magazine, in the Arminian Magazine, in the Gentleman's Magazine, and in several of the poetical collections of the Wesleys; but she could never be prevailed upon to publish a complete edition of her poems. Had they been thus given to the world, they would have maintained their place among works of genius; they would have been handed down forever from generation to generation of the Wesleyans, of whose body she was a devoted member; and they would have conferred upon her now almost forgotten name a poetical immortality. But, like the most of her sisters, she was weighed down with a perpetual affliction. Her husband, a man of neither position, nor worth, nor moral character, was a constant shame and grief to her delicate and shrinking nature. "She was very unfortunate,' says a contemporary, "as you will find by her poems, which are written with great delicacy, but so tender and affecting, that they can scarce be read without tears." If this be so, what must have been the anguish of her who wrote them! It would be easy, from the extant productions of this child of sorrow, sent here of heaven to be a child of song, to justify the loftiest panegyrics that have been pronounced upon her genius. Her address to her fallen husband, tender and terrible by turns, though unsuccessful in recalling him to the paths of sobriety and virtue, is one of the most touching and powerful compositions in the language. Her Lines written

Digitized by Google

when in deep Anguish of Spirit, are also almost incomparable for depth of tone and beauty of expression. Her Farewell to the World is the self-indited requiem of a broken heart, reminding the reader of the talents and the fate of Mozart, and, as a work of art, equal to anything from the pen of Addison. But all these pieces are too lengthy for quotation. There is one, however, out of the many which I find it difficult not to reproduce, at least in part, which, by reason of its brevity, I will give the reader as a specimen of her powers of almost extemporaneous composition. It is the little poem entitled A Mother's Address to her Dying Infant; it was indited from her pillow during her confinement with the child which was perishing before her eyes by convulsions; and the reader may easily perceive, from the poem itself, and from the well-known sorrows from which she could fervently ask her Maker to be relieved, that the verses flowed from the bottom of her heart:

"Tender softness! infant mild!
Perfect, purest, brightest child!
Transient luster! beauteous clay!
Smiling wonder of a day!
Ere the last convulsive start
Rends thy unresisting heart;
Ere the long enduring swoon
Weigh thy precious eyelids down;
Ah, regard a mother's moan,
Anguish deeper than thy own!
Fairest eyes, whose dawning light
Late with rapture blest my sight,
Ere your orbs extinguished be,
Bend their trembling beams on me!
Drooping sweetness! verdant flower!
Blooming, withering in an hour!
Ere thy gentle breast sustains
Latest, fiercest, mortal pains,
Hear a suppliant! let me be
Partner in thy destiny!

Digitized by Google

That, whene'er the fatal cloud
Must thy radiant temples shroud;
When deadly damps, impending now,
Shall hover round thy destined brow,
Diffusive may their influence be,
And with the blossom blast the tree!"

When Anne Wesley, the fifth of the seven daughters, was married to John Lambert, her brother Samuel sent them a beautiful epithalamium, which Dr. Clarke wished he had the means of putting into the hands of every newly-married couple in the kingdom; it is a poem of solid wisdom and of exquisite beauty of conception and expression; it gracefully points out a humble and holy life to be the way of duty and of earthly bliss:

"Let them be humble, pious, wise,
Nor higher station wish to know;
Since only those deserve to rise,
Who live contented to be low;"

and it would seem that the persons addressed, whether of their own choice, or from this brotherly suggestion, took the road to happiness thus portrayed:

"Through diligence and well-earned gain,
In growing plenty may you live;
And each in piety obtain
Repose that riches cannot give."

Whatever else this couple had, it is certain that they had *repose;* they lived in all quietness, having a competence of the things of this life, and looking with peaceful anticipations to the superior blessings of another; for, while every other brother and sister was called upon to ask for relief or comfort of their brother John, "the commoner almoner of the family," as he is styled by Dr. Clarke, there is no record or tradition of any application of this kind from Anne; and the reasonable conclusion, that they passed their days in unambitious ease, is

Digitized by Google

nearly all that is now known of the probable fortunes of their life. That Mr. Lambert was a gentleman of fine education is distinctly asserted of him; that his wife had mind, and cultivation, and genius, perhaps equal to those of the most gifted of her kindred, can scarcely be doubted by any one who recollects what every other member of this household was. Nor is the lack of literary remains any proof of the want of genius. It is well known that necessity, since the world began, has been the chief stimulant to intellectual labor. The history of literature is but little more than the history of men and women who had small reliance for a livelihood except upon the coinage of their brains. Look at Shakspeare, a poor boy holding the horses of gentlemen before the theaters of London, till he learned to live by the labors of his pen. Look at Milton, born of affluent parents and for years maintaining a high rank among the office holders of the British government, but producing his greatest work only when stript of his patrimonial estates and turned out of all employment by the resentment of his enemies; and that immortal epic, the exclusive sale of which should have made him the wealthiest gentleman of England, he sells for twenty-five dollars, and at once hands the money to his baker. There was Joseph Addison, the first prose-writer of the English language, five hundred pages from whose pen should have made him as wealthy and as independent as a peer of the realm, wrote thousands of pages of the most charming character, clear as the sunlight and as beautiful as a flower garden, and yet was compelled to obtain a portion of his needed income by performing the drudgery of certain petty offices till he could write no longer, when he eked out the remainder of his days on a paltry pension. Smollett, whose works are still one of the treasures of our language, wrote in penury and died a beggar in a foreign land. Goldsmith lived a beggar, and, after having written the best fiction and thrown off some of the most splendid poetical creations now known in any language, and all to procure the

Digitized by Google

means of living, died insolvent. Cowley died of melancholy brought upon him by a combination of poverty, over-exertion, and disappointment. Collins, whose wants had driven him to labor beyond his strength, in a fit of desperation burnt an entire edition of his immortal odes, because the world did not take them from him fast enough to meet the demands of his existence. Johnson, as every one knows, began writing in a garret, and wrote in proportion to his necessities, all the while fretted by his want of the success he felt conscious of deserving; but he was too strong at heart to break down, or even bow, under the weight of his labor and misfortune; and he continued to the close of his life to conquer a place and the means of existence by the productions of his pen. Dryden wrote by the day, and received his pay at night, like any fourth-rate penny-a-liner of our times. Dr. Lightfoot, the leading oriental scholar of his age, toiled like a galley-slave for money, and produced the splendid collection of his works under the daily lash of want. Poor Chatterton did even worse than this; having sent forth some of the finest specimens of composition to be found within the circle of English literature, and receiving nothing but neglect, he determined not to endure the common fate of authorship; and so, bidding a silent adieu to his widowed mother, who could not support him longer without his coöperation, he closed his unhappy days by drinking poison. The whole line of authorship, from Chatterton back to Homer, and forward to the hard-working authors of our own generation, shows us little else than a series of indefatigable laborers spurred to their employment by the want of bread. But I have mentioned cases enough for the establishment of a fact so generally acknowledged; and I have taken my examples from the country and historic period of the subject of this paragraph. It is clear enough that the literary exertion of every people, with individual exceptions, is the result of some strong necessity for labor; and, as Mrs. Lambert had all the comforts and

Digitized by Google

luxuries of life at hand without the condition of manual or mental toil, it is presumable that she lacked only the stimulus necessary to genius, and not the possession of that genius which was the common inheritance of her family. There is one service she performed to the cause of literature, at least to the literature of Methodism, which, in a great measure, repays us for the lack of any productions of her own. She was the collector and preserver of all the fugitive compositions of her kindred; it is to her diligence and care, in this capacity, that we are indebted for nearly everything we know respecting the lives, characters and literary efforts of her less noted brothers and sisters, and even of her mother; she seems to have had a passion, which was shared by her amiable and accomplished husband, to gather and preserve whatever could be procured of their ephemeral efforts; and this may have been the work to which a wise Providence, who saw from the beginning the position which her family were to occupy in the history of these latter ages, consecrated this one member of a most gifted race by not permitting it to be taxed to the drudgery of ordinary literary labor.[1]

Miss Martha Wesley, the sixth of the Wesley daughters, became the wife of an English clergyman, whose name was Hall. Martha was the favorite of Mrs. Wesley; and Charles wondered how a woman of his mother's strength of mind could be led to indulge so much partiality as was shown to his sister; but it seems that the character of this daughter was so peculiarly satisfactory to a parent, that it is easy

[1] The name of Chatterton has been mentioned in the list of hard-working and disappointed authors; his life and labors have moved to tears the sensitive of more than his own generation; but it is not generally known that his first production, composed in his twelfth year, was a satire written in condemnation of a backsliding Methodist, who had abandoned his faith and left the connection out of mercenary motives. Chatterton's mother was a hearer of Mr. Wesley; and Chatterton himself was one of the earliest defenders of Wesleyan Methodism.

Digitized by Google

enough to see how it might make a very decided and permanent impression upon her mother. Dr. Clarke represents her and her brother John as so strikingly alike in their personal appearance, that, had both been dressed in male or both in female garments, it would have been impossible for him, who was so perfectly familiar with the family, to have distinguished them. They were equally alike, too, in their intellectual and moral qualities. With something of the poetical in her composition, her strength lay in her logical ability, in which she was a match for almost any person of her acquaintance. She was a friend and favorite of Dr. Samuel Johnson. She visited familiarly at his house; she was admitted freely into his domestic circle; she was invited by him, at one period of her life, to make his residence her home; and she was one of a very few individuals, male or female, whom he ever suffered to contradict him. "It is no wonder," says Dr. Clarke, "that Dr. Johnson valued her conversation. In many cases it supplied the absence of books; her memory was a repository of the most striking events of past centuries; and she had the best parts of all our best poets by heart. She delighted in literary discussions, and moral argumentations, not for display, but for the exercise of her mental faculties, and to increase her fund of useful knowledge; and she bore opposition with the same composure as regulated all the other parts of her conduct." One of the slightest specimens of these discussions, at the table of Dr. Johnson, chanced to be listened to by Boswell, and so this Wesley daughter finds a place in his life of the great moralist. It was on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1781, that Mr. Boswell found a party at Dr. Johnson's dinner table, among whom were Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Du Moulin, and Mrs. Hall. "I mentioned," says the narrator, "a kind of religious Robin Hood society, which met every Sunday morning at Coachmakers'-hall for free debate, and that the subject for this night was the text which relates, with other miracles, what happened at our Saviour's death:

Digitized by Google

'And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.' Mrs. Hall said it was a very curious subject, and she should like to hear it discussed. Johnson replied, somewhat warmly, 'One would not go to such a place to hear it—one would not be seen in such a place—to give countenance to such a meeting. I, however, resolved that I would go.' 'But, sir,' said she to Johnson, 'I should like to hear *you* discuss it.' He seemed reluctant to engage in it. She talked of the resurrection of the human race in general, and maintained that we shall be raised with the same bodies.' Johnson: 'Nay, madam, we see that it is not to be the same body, for the Scripture uses the illustration of grain sown. You cannot suppose that we shall rise with a diseased body; it is enough if there be such a sameness as to distinguish identity of person.' She seemed to be desirous of knowing more, but he left the question in obscurity." Mrs. Hall's religious influence over Dr. Johnson was decided; and she never failed, on a fit opportunity, to throw out a thought, or a suggestion, which was sure to make an impression upon a mind like his. "One day," says Clarke, "when Mrs. Hall was present, the doctor began to expatiate on the unhappiness of human life. Mrs. Hall said, 'Doctor, you have always lived among the wits, not the saints; and they are a race of people the most unlikely to seek true happiness, or find the peace without price.'" Mrs. Hall made very profound observations in philosophy, particularly in relation to God as manifested in creation. One of her characteristic sayings was, "What would have been the inclination of a kind nature was made a command, that our beloved Creator might reward it." The revolutionary maxim—*Vox populi, vox Dei*, was once repeated in her presence, and the speaker went on to enforce the idea, that the public voice was the voice of truth. "Yes," said Mrs. Hall, "and the public voice in Pilate's hall was, 'crucify him!

Digitized by Google

crucify him!'" The glittering sophism never received a better answer. In this unobtrusive manner, this lady exerted a strong and long-continued influence upon Dr. Johnson, and upon such men as Garrick, and Burke, and the wits of the famous Soho club, with whom she associated on terms of great personal popularity. She respected the abilities of these distinguished characters, but was not dazzled by their genius, for she used to exhort her youthful associates "to avoid that blind admiration of talents which is apt to regard temper and the moral virtues as secondary;" and this advice was sometimes given in the company of the most brilliant men of letters of Great Britain. There was a similarity between her genius and that of Dr. Johnson in several particulars; the resemblance was most of all striking in the circumstance that neither of them could ever bear to converse, or to hear conversation, on melancholy subjects. There is one trait, on the contrary, in which they were equally dissimilar. Johnson, though grave and powerful, was frequently not only witty but terribly caustic and even withering in his sarcasm. Mrs. Hall conscientiously discouraged wit; her brother Charles used to say that she was "too wise to be witty;" but she possessed all the elements of this sparkling talent; and there is an instance given where, in a debate with Johnson, who had thrust her with what power he had, the lady had the courage and ability to retort on him with such success as to make him the momentary laughter of the company. Scarcely any other person of her day would have dared to risk such an encounter with the great autocrat of British learning; but her victory was so complete, and her position with her assailant was so much to her advantage, that Johnson not only yielded with an elephantine grace to his defeat, but at length joined in the laugh raised and enjoyed at his expense. There is no doubt, indeed, from all that remains of Mrs. Hall, and especially from the company she kept, that she was received as one of the first literary women of her

Digitized by Google

eived generation; but she left no works. Her marriage was ex-
exe· ceedingly unfortunate. Her husband, falling from his original character of respectability, and sinking from one depth of infamy to another, became at last so corrupt that it was indecent for any woman to be with him. With this disadvantage to overcome, the talents and virtues of his wife were such as to raise her to the summit of social consequence; and she was enabled to drown her misery in the conversations of the great and good; but she had no heart left for literary labor; and the result is, her career is comprised in the single sentence, that, gifted to the first degree with genius, and educated according to her endowments, she led a high and influential life in the society of the leading characters of her day, among whom she was acknowledged as an equal, and died at an extreme age universally lamented by men of letters.[1]

The last of the seven Wesley daughters, Kezziah Wesley, was all her days an invalid, and died as she was ripening into womanhood. She followed for a few years the profession of a teacher; her school was at Lincoln; and she was greatly respected by every member of her father's family, as well as by the public. There is nothing from her pen but a few letters to her relatives; in these we find that easy and natural diction, and that exquisite felicity of poetical quotation, so characteristic of her kindred; but we must lay her in her grave; the monument we raise over her must be a shaft broken near its base; and the world must never know what reasons a longer life would have furnished for a more glowing record. One thing is true of every one of her brothers and of her sisters. Though giving early proofs of their mental character, there was not a specimen of marked precocity among them; they all ripened slowly, attaining their full maturity at a period of life rather beyond the average of the

[1] Wesley Family, pp 558–597, and Boswell's Life of Johnson.

Digitized by Google

gifted of mankind; and there is little doubt, therefore, that Kezziah, had she reached an age corresponding to the common lot of her family, would have made a reputation worthy of her name and origin. She had the blood of the Wesleys in her; and the value of that blood, even when diluted by admixture with that of an inferior race, is witnessed in the remarkable talents, and often in the genius, of the children of the succeeding generation. The last surviving son of Martha, for example, the beautiful, the accomplished, the very pious Wesley Hall, who died at the age of fourteen, was such a prodigy of mental and moral superiority, that his character was at once immortalized in verse:

"Where is the fair Elysian flower,
The blooming youth that charmed our eyes?
Cut down and withered in an hour,
But now transplanted to the skies.
He triumphs o'er the moldering tomb;
He blossoms in eternal bloom!

"Nor did he perish immature,
Who, starting, *won* the shortened race,
Unspotted from the world, and pure,
And saved and sanctified by grace.
The child fulfills his hundred years,
And ripe before his God appears!"

There was also Miss Sarah Wesley, attendant and friend of her aunt Hall, who seems to have been a lady of strong intellectual character and of great personal attractions. Her brother Charles, too, born in Bristol in 1757, was a musical prodigy from his earliest childhood. When an infant his mother used to lull him to sleep by playing to him on her harpsichord, an instrument resembling the modern pianoforte; when a little older, she would tie him before the instrument to his chair, allowing him to amuse himself by drumming upon the key-board; and in process of time, before he was four years old, he one day surprised his father by playing an

Digitized by Google

air correctly, in proper accent and measure. Soon afterward, his father took him to London, where he so struck the leading musicians that they proposed to recommend him for admission among the king's boys. At the age of six, he was placed under the tuition of a master at Bristol, who put him at once, without the usual introductory exercises, to the study of the works of Corelli, of Scarlatti, and of Handel; and it was thought, that, at the age of twelve, there was no person in England able to surpass him in executing the compositions of these masters. Such was the genius of the elder of the Rev. Charles Wesley's sons; but the younger, Samuel Wesley, must be considered as having surpassed his brother, as he combined the poetical with the musical abilities of his kindred. He could play the organ when but three years old; at eight, he attempted the composition of an oratorio, some of the airs of which were pronounced by Dr. Boyce, a musical authority of London, "among the most pleasing he had heard;" and at a later period, he composed a high mass and sent it to Pope Pius the Sixth, who thanked the composer in a Latin epistle sent through his English apostolic vicar. There is a story related of little Samuel that must be regarded as an astonishing evidence of precocity. His brother, still a youth, was selected to play a violin solo at a concert before the corporation of the city; but he was called away from home, just before the time, when Samuel was chosen to take his place; Charles, however, unexpectedly returned, which caused Samuel to be put aside; and the boy resented this levity of treatment in a poetical epistle to Dr. Ludlow, his musical friend, which, as a specimen of juvenile genius, is worth more than a thousand concerts. Milton and Pope are both celebrated for their early poetical compositions; but neither of them has left to the world any childhood performance superior to the Appeal of the second son of the Rev. Charles Wesley:

Digitized by Google

"To you, dear doctor, I appeal—
To all the tuneful city;
Am I not used extremely ill
By the musical committee?

"Why, 'tis enough to make one wild,
They court, and then refuse me;
They advertise and call me 'child,'
And like a child they use me.

"Excusing their contempt, they say,
Which more inflames my passion,
I am not grave enough to play
Before the corporation.

"To the sweet city-waits although
I may not hold a candle,
I question if their worships' know
The odds 'twixt me and Handel.

"A child of eight years old, I grant,
Must be both light and giddy—
The solidness of Burgan want,
The steadiness of Liddie.

"Yet quick, perhaps, as other folks,
I can assign a reason,
And keep my time as well as Holks,
And come as much in season.

"With Bristol organist, not yet
I come in competition;
Yet let them know, I would be great—
I do not want ambition.

"Spirit I do not want, or will,
Upon a just occasion,
To make the rash despisers feel
My weight of indignation.

"The trodden worm will turn again,
And shall not I resent it?
Who gave the sore affront in vain—
They would with tears repent it.

Digitized by Google

"Still will I fret, and fume, and rage,
And keener wax, and keener,
Unless they prudently assuage
My anger with a Steyner."

It will be recollected that Pope's earliest extant poem was written at the age of twelve, and Milton's at fifteen, while here is one, in good rhyme and measure, composed by this scion of the Wesley family but eight years old. The truth is, there never was a drop of Wesleyan blood, coming from the Epworth rector and his wife, but it carried genius in it. They were the most remarkable family, not only for religion, but for intellectual ability, for a combination of the higher qualities of reason, memory and imagination, to which must be added the gift of music, of which we have any record in modern history. The names of John and Charles, indeed, are not required to make full proof of this assertion; the less known members of the general household are enough to establish it beyond a question; but when it is remembered that Charles Wesley, besides being a great scholar, was the first lyric poet of his age and country, and that John Wesley was the most voluminous author of his century, though he had the personal oversight of the Wesleyan reformation in Europe and in America, there can remain, as it seems to me, no thought of competition among the most literary families of recent generations. If it is a law in human nature, that no people can ever arrive at a consciousness of real greatness without having a noble ancestry to inspire them with reverence for their origin, a primeval age of heroism to look back upon, it must be confessed that Methodism is peculiarly fortunate in its first historic family; and the rank and power of Methodism, the world over, and in all ages, will have this advantage, that its form, spirit and tendencies were given to it and sanctioned, not by those of little mind and vulgar education, but by persons of the highest moral aim, who were

Digitized by Google

also the intellectual associates of Addison, Pope, Swift, Garrick, Burke and Johnson.

It must be remembered, however, that as yet no estimate has been made, no representation given, of the literary labors of the two most distinguished of the Wesleys. Charles Wesley, though an able and industrious preacher, and the author of a collection of sermons, is known as the lyric poet of Methodism, whose pen was so prolific in poetical composition, that from the duodecimo volume to the pamphlet of two or three sheets, his distinct publications amount to forty-eight in number. He left in manuscript several thick quarto volumes of sacred and miscellaneous poems. His fame rests not, however, on the quantity, but on the quality, of his productions. His prose is simple, neat, and yet elegant composition, reminding the reader, every now and then, of Steele's contributions to the Spectator. His diction is as pure as that of Addison, but he had not the talent at latent humor, and the grace of winding off his periods, of the classic and immortal Clio. But in lyric poetry, the English language has as yet produced no one entirely his equal. Let any competent critic look through the whole range of English lyric poetry, from the rugged attempts of Sternhold to the sentimental hymns and psalms of Dr. Watts, and unless prejudiced by ecclesiastical connections, the balance of lyric genius will be found to fall in favor of the Wesleyan bard. Dr. Watts, as I think, is Mr. Charles Wesley's superior in the general structure of his sentences, as well as in the flow and softness of his verse; his figures, however, are drawn too much from nature, and yet too little from that part of nature which has been rendered sacred and familiar by the penmen of Holy Writ; there is a conceit, a prettiness, in the style of Dr. Watts, which we expect to find in the smaller poets of the sentimental class, but which mar the simple grandeur of devotional compositions. When a man lifts up his voice in the praises of Almighty God, he does not wish to trifle with such delicacies

Digitized by Google

as rainbows and roses, but to utter the deep emotions of a broken or confiding heart. Dr. Watts, however, is almost always liable to introduce the images of a superficial imagination into the sublimest productions of his genius. Charles Wesley, though keenly alive to everything beautiful in the material universe, rose so high in his lyrics as to lose sight of terrestrial objects, or touched upon them only for a moment to take his flight to more glorious themes. Wesley is never sentimental; he never adorns his poems with the fancies and bagatelles of the poetic art; he never fetters the soaring spirit by a burden, however gay and sweet, of empyrean stars and the flowers of earth. Watts often begins his hymns where the lark closes his morning song—"at heaven's gate;" and he then as frequently descends and perches upon some pretty bush, or lights upon a green and flowery bank, to conclude an anthem in the audience of the beasts and birds, which should have closed at the foot of the very throne of God. Wesley, on the other hand, begins where Watts terminates his songs, and then rises at once, on the pinions of a lofty and victorious faith, till, like the rapt apostle on the isle of the apocalypse, he falls prostrate amidst heavenly splendors too refulgent for mortal sight. Watts, and his school of poets, are warmly sensuous, praising in reality the works and workmanship of God in the name of glorifying God himself. When looking at the life of faith on earth, the soft and smoothly-flowing Watts would set the soul to singing:

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night
And pleasures banish pain.

"There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

Digitized by Google

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood
When Jordan rolled between."

That is all like Watts. It is precisely what would have been expected from his pen; and it is seen that "pleasures," "infinite day," "everlasting spring," "never-withering flowers," "sweet fields" and "living green," all sensuous images of material joy, are the staple of every stanza. The same style of sentimentalism runs through all the lyric poetry of Stennet, Steele, Addison, Opie, and all the poets of the school of Watts. Stennet wants the man of God to console himself for the troubles of this world by standing "on Jordan's stormy banks" and looking over into Canaan's "fair and happy land," where he sees nothing but

"Sweet fields arrayed in living green
And rivers of delight."

Steele, like Plato, regards us as living here in a sort of dungeon; and the highest joys of faith consist, according to his lyric verse, in throwing our mental vision forward to the light and glory of the coming world:

"Far from these scenes of night,
Unbounded glories rise,
And realms of joy and pure delight
Unknown to mortal *eyes*.

"Fair land!—could mortal *eyes*
But half its charms explore,
How would our spirits long to rise,
And dwell on earth no more!"

The charms of heaven are made up, in the mind of Steele, of what is most dazzling and captivating to "mortal eyes;" and a similar sensuousness marks the best passages of Addison, who, in the most beautiful of all his hymns, which many a

Digitized by Google

good man has adopted as his evening and morning pillow prayer, desires the believing heart to trust in that great Shepherd whose goodness and skill had "prepared his pasture" as a celestial paradise:

"When in the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales and dewy meads,
My weary, wandering steps he leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.

"Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through devious, lonely wilds I stray,
Thy bounty shall my pains beguile,
The barren wilderness shall smile,
With sudden greens and herbage crowned,
And streams shall murmur all around!"

Mrs. Opie, in the excess of this style of sensuous worship, is not satisfied with the pleasures of a single sense, but blends the enjoyments of several, not only within the compass of a poem, but oftentimes in the same line, and not seldom in a solitary figure:

"There *seems* a voice in every gale,
A *tongue* in every flower,
Which tells, O Lord, the wondrous tale
Of thy almighty power;
The birds that rise on quivering wing,
Proclaim their Maker's praise,
And all the mingling sounds of spring
To thee an anthem raise."

This tribe of lyric poets, in fact, can find no words with which to celebrate the glories of that inner life, which lives and is ever to live by faith on the Son of God, not drawn directly from the scenes and pleasures of this beautiful but transitory world. Even Cowper, whose genius was more spiritual than that of either of the poets mentioned, mars the loftiest of his hymns by condescending to represent the Pro-

Digitized by Google

vidence of God by comparing it to the growth of a flowering plant:

> "His purposes will *ripen* fast,
> *Unfolding* every hour;
> The *bud* may have a bitter taste,
> But sweet will be the *flower*;"

and Milton, too, the most sublime of modern poets, whom his latest and most learned biographer represents as the least sensuous of all the great bards of his time, and who lashed his Mammon because

> ——"e'en in Heaven, his looks and thoughts
> Were always downward bent, admiring more
> The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
> Than aught, divine or holy, else enjoyed.
> In vision beatific"——

in his Christmas hymn, man's universal anthem at the birth of Christ, *describes* rather than *utters* the joy of a ransomed world, and commands the planets and the rolling thunder to make the chorus in which they should have only joined with the bounding heart of a redeemed and triumphant race:

> "Ring out ye crystal spheres,
> Once bless our human ears,
> If ye have power to touch our *senses* so;
> And let your silver chime
> Move in melodious time;
> And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow;
> And with your ninefold harmony,
> Make up full consort to the angelic symphony."

Milton's defence is, that his Christmas hymn, like his hymns of paradise, which he puts into the mouth of our first parents, was made to be read, not sung; and it would be entirely satisfactory if the same thing could be said for the poets of the school of Dr. Watts. It is possible, indeed, that Addison

Digitized by Google

never dreamed of anybody's wanting to sing the beautiful composition from which I have quoted, or any other of his so-called hymns; it is equally possible that the same criticism would be simple justice to the memory of Steele; but it is certain that Watts, as well as Stennet and Mrs. Opie, wrote expressly for the church; and yet, a very large proportion of the lyric poems of Dr. Watts consists of descriptions of scenes calculated to inspire the reader with poetic feeling, rather than to supply language to the worshiping spirit, which yearns for something through which to pour out the religious emotions that come gushing from the depths of the heart. As a general poet, Watts stands, I think, somewhat higher than Charles Wesley; his imagination was more active; his admiration of nature was more absorbing; and his versification is softer, smoother, and more fluent. As a lyric poet, Charles Wesley occupies, according to my judgment, a much more eminent position than that of Dr. Watts. His hymns are not descriptive poems; nor are they weakened by an excess of material imagery; nor do they seem to have been written to be read. They are songs; they are deeply religious songs; they are personal songs, not made to show how another man might sing, or how men ought to sing, or what reasons they have for singing, as is the case with a large part of the hymns of Dr. Watts; but they are the words employed by the individual worshiper, in which the "he" and "they" of Watts are replaced by the more direct "I" of all real praise. They are the words of the soul, not when touched by the beautiful forms of nature, but when roused by that "beatific vision," spoken of by Milton, or lost in the blaze of that "realizing light" of faith, which the worshiper feels to be the substance of his own experience, an emanation from himself. In the very first verse of the first hymn of the Methodist collection, Charles Wesley, personating every individual who worships God from his own heart, gives the key-note to Wesleyan hymnology when he exclaims:

Digitized by Google

"O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of *my* God and king,
The triumphs of his grace.

"Jesus!—the name that charms *our* fears,
That bids *our* sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for *me!*"

The reader will see at once how free these stanzas are from all description, from all sensuous imagery, and how personal they are, making every man that sings them feel that they are the expression of his own glowing spirit. A congregation cannot utter such a hymn as a congregation; for it disintegrates the most compact assembly, bringing out the distinct individuality of each component element; and then, instead of running off like Watts into a poetic rhapsody of how the material world should feel in the presence of such a Saviour,

"O, for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,"

the poet calls on those who had received the benefits of Christ's passion to join in this song of praise:

"Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come,
And leap, ye lame for joy!"

It was a remark of Dr. Watts, that he would give all that he had ever written to have been the author of Charles Wesley's hymn, entitled "Wrestling Jacob;" but I cannot

Digitized by Google

think that that poem is the best of those composed before the decease of Dr. Watts; and John Wesley, referring to this generous concession of the departed bard, wonders what he would have said, if he had lived to read several of the subsequent compositions of the Wesleyan poet. As a poem, Wrestling Jacob leaves nothing to desire, nothing for the severest critic to propose; it is less lyrical, however, than dramatic; it is more in the style of Watts than anything else written by Charles Wesley at that date; it is quite equal for sublimity to Milton's Christmas hymn; but it always sounds better from the pulpit, when read by a clergyman competent to render it in full force, than from the quire, which finds it impossible of adaptation to the demands of music. It is surprising, certainly, how the author of this remarkable poem has wrought out the history of that process which we call conversion, giving in the progress of the piece the successive steps taken in passing over from a mere intellectual assent to Christianity as a system to that termination of the struggle when the victorious soul cries out:

"Lame as I am, I take the prey;
Hell, earth, and sin, with ease o'ercome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
And as a bounding hart, fly home,
Through all eternity to prove,
Thy nature and thy name is Love."

But the poem must be read, not sung, to make a full discovery of its merits; and this is only saying, that, as a general poet, Charles Wesley has written one piece, at least, surpassing everthing from the pen of Dr. Watts; but a better comparison of the two hymnists, as hymnists, will be made by placing before us the acknowledged master-piece of the one, and then laying by the side of it one or two of the other, if the reader will only give to each the best rendering within the compass of his voice and taste:

Digitized by Google

"My God the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights:

"In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun.

"The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss,
If Jesus shows his heart is mine,
And whispers I am his.

"My soul would leave this heavy clay
At that transporting word,
Run up with joy the shining way,
To embrace my dearest Lord.

"Fearless of hell and ghastly death,
I'd break through every foe;
The wings of love and arms of faith
Shall bear me conqueror through."

There it is, then, the master-piece of Watts in full, without the amendments of Mr. Wesley, which, Dr. Milner admits, were necessary to make it perfect. The following is what Milner says of the poem as a whole: "This hymn is almost without 'spot or blemish,' if we except the last line of the fourth verse, which has certainly been amended by Wesley. For felicity of expression, strength and tenderness of feeling, and beautiful pictorial truth, it has never been surpassed; it is a sublime communion with the Deity made visible to the eye of faith, and brought near with the cords of love, giving birth to a majestic burst of impassioned and irrepressible joy and triumph." But that burst of joy and triumph, let it be observed, occurs in the very last stanza, while all the preceding stanzas are marked, with all their sweetness and melody of versification, by that "pictorial" style which mars so much

Digitized by Google

the hymns of Dr. Watts. As a piece of poetical composition, it is beautiful beyond a question; but as a song, it has too much of the material world, and too little of the soul of man. It has a good deal of personality in it, thus approaching Charles Wesley's style more nearly than any other of Watts's hymns; but there is nothing positive in the experience of that personality; the person singing it asserts nothing for himself, but opens every strain with the conditional *if*, or *would*, or similar term of doubt; and it is not the language of a believer,

"Who *knows* his sins forgiven,"

but of a man looking out of himself upon some imaginary condition, which, did he only enjoy it, *would* give him all the transport described, not felt, in the successive stanzas. It is directly here that the reader will find the chief difference between Watts and Wesley. Watts is forever telling how gloriously a man would feel *if* he only enjoyed religion, how deeply he *must* suffer without this enjoyment, or how miserably his days *would* waste along should he cast away his confidence and return to the vanities of this transitory life. Wesley tells how the true Christian, or the trembling sinner, or the cold backslider *does* feel; and he puts the words appropriate to their several circumstances into their own mouths, and makes them utter their own present joys, and pains, and sorrows. Watts says—

"*Could* we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er;
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore."

Wesley, touching upon the same theme, exclaims:

"Rejoicing *now* in earnest hope,
I stand, and from the mountain top,
See all the land below.

Digitized by Google

Rivers of milk and honey rise,
And all the fruits of paradise
In endless plenty grow."

Watts, in portraying the condition of an awakened sinner, makes him look forward to his doom and say:

"That awful day *will* surely come
The appointed hour makes haste—
When I *must* stand before my judge,
And pass the solemn test.

"Thou lovely Chief of all my joys,
Thou sovereign of my heart,
How *could* I bear to hear thy voice
Pronounce the sound, Depart!

"The thunder of that dismal word
Would so distress my ear,
'Twould tear my soul asunder, Lord,
With most tormenting fear!"

There is personality in these lines, but everything terrible is yet to come; the poor sinner is made to put far off the evil day and imagine a distress he only expects to feel. Now listen to Charles Wesley on the same topic:

"Depth of mercy! can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?

"I have long withstood his grace;
Long provoked him to his face;
Would not hearken to his calls;
Grieved him by a thousand falls.

"*Now* incline me to repent;
Let me *now* my sins lament;
Now my foul revolt deplore,
Weep, believe, and sin no more!"

Watts gives us a picture of a backslider mourning over his

Digitized by Google

waywardness of life; though written in the first person, it is nevertheless the picture of some other man; it is simply the *history* of a backslider's life in general; and when the worshiper stands up to sing, he feels that he is called to lament the condition, not of himself, but of some one else:

"When my forgetful soul renews
The Saviour of thy grace,
My heart presumes I cannot lose
The relish all my days.

"But ere one fleeting hour is past,
The flattering world employs
Some sensual bait to seize my taste,
And to pollute my joys.

"Trifles of nature, or of art,
With fair deceitful charms,
Intrude into my thoughtless heart,
And thrust me from thy arms.

"Then I repent, and vex my soul,
That I should leave thee so;
Where will their wild affections roll,
That let a Saviour go?"

Hear, now, the personal anguish, the personal confession, and personal confidence of the returning prodigal, as he writhes, and laments, and trusts, in the words of Wesley!

"Yes from this instant, *now*, I will
To my offended Father cry;
My base ingratitude I *feel*;
Vilest of all thy children, I;
Not worthy to be called thy son;
Yet will I thee my father own.

"Guide of my life hast thou not been,
And rescued me from passion's power?
Ten thousand times preserved from sin,
Nor let the greedy grave devour?

Digitized by Google

And wilt thou now thy wrath retain,
Nor ever love thy child again?

"If thou hast called me to return—
If weeping at thy feet I fall—
The prodigal thou wilt not spurn,
But pity and forgive me all,
In answer to my Friend above—
In honor of his bleeding love!"

The distinguishing peculiarity of Wesley, as a lyric poet, is the same as that of Shakspeare among dramatic poets. He does not describe a character, or a passion, but enacts it. He throws himself into the attitude of the character which he wishes to represent, feels all that such a character himself could feel, and then utters the sentiments, the experience, of the character in the most fitting language. He is successively, in obedience to this mode of composition, a lost and wretched sinner, withering and quaking under the anguish he carries in him; then an awakened penitent, beating his breast like the praying publican; then a new-born believer, trusting to the glimmering light that has dawned within him, but trembling lest the light go out and return him to the land of darkness; then a confirmed and grown up Christian, strong in the faith once delivered to the saints, and working his way forward to yet loftier attainments; then a miserable backslider, who, having tasted of the good word of God and the joys of the world to come, finds nothing but emptiness in the most solid enjoyments of his sad estate; then a repenting prodigal, whose soul is wrung with the wrong he has done the cause of his Lord and Master, and whose spirit moves, nevertheless, at the dear privilege of coming back again to his first works and to the pardoning love of God; then a vigorous co-worker in the great enterprise of the world's redemption—a runner running like a herald with the trumpet of salvation at his lips—a fighter fighting the good fight of faith like a valiant soldier of the venerated cross—jubilant

Digitized by Google

with the thought of his thus helping forward an undertaking begun in heaven and to be completed in the ultimate regeneration and renovation of this earth; then a suffering saint, broken by misfortune, forgotten of his friends, neglected by the world, and yet singing:

"Although the vine its fruit deny,
Although the olive yield no oil,
The withering fig-trees droop and die,
The fields elude the tiller's toil,
The empty stall no herd afford,
And perish all the bleating race,
Yet will I triumph in the Lord,
The God of my salvation praise;"

then a prosperous member of the church on earth, favored with the smiles of Providence, rich in the abundance of his possessions, surrounded by all the seductions of the world, and yet breaking forth in the most decisive strains:

"Vain, delusive world, adieu,
With all of creature good;
Only Jesus I pursue,
Who bought me with his blood;
All thy pleasures I forego;
I trample on thy wealth and pride;
Only Jesus will I know,
And Jesus crucified;"

then an afflicted patient thrown upon a bed of pain, gradually sinking beneath the weight of his fleshly ills, but still exclaiming:

"How happy every child of grace,
Who knows his sins forgiven!
This earth, he cries, is not my place,
I seek my place in heaven;
A country far from mortal sight,
Yet, O, by faith I see;
The land of rest, the saints' delight,
The heaven prepared for *me*;"

Digitized by Google

then the recipient of unexpected health, restored by the special favor of his God, not turning away from his father as he finds himself receiving back his strength, nor repining at the severity of Providence, but rejoicing at the smitings of the needed rod:

"How happy the sorrowful man,
Whose sorrow is sent from above!
Indulged with a visit of pain,
Chastised with a visit of love:
The Author of all his distress
He comes by affliction to know,
And God he in heaven shall bless,
That ever he suffered below;"

then a poor orphan, or a lonely widow, bowed down at times with a sense of their desolation, but delivered in good season from their distresses, and softly uniting in the strain:

"Sorrow and fear are gone,
Whene'er thy face appears;
It stills the sighing orphan's moan,
And dries the widow's tears;"

then a possessor of much love toward God and humanity, not satisfied with present attainments, but calling to the great Fountain of this heavenly feeling to pour it more copiously upon him, in strains which the great Handel himself saw fit to set to music:

"God only knows the love of God;
O that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart;
For love I sigh, for love I pine;
This only portion, Lord, be mine;
Be mine this better part;"

then a communicant of this sacred gospel, whose soul is full of its holy comforts, and who, in his zeal to give an immediate

Digitized by Google

knowledge of it to all the world, feels almost impatient of the steady fervor of the pulpit, and from his seat in the house of God challenges and charges the ministry, the church and the people, to a greater energy and a more hearty work:

"Blow ye the trumpet, blow
The gladly solemn sound;
Let all the nations know,
To earth's remotest bound,
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home;

"Extol the Lamb of God,
The all-atoning Lamb;
Redemption in his blood
Throughout the world proclaim:
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home;

"The gospel trumpet hear–
The news of heavenly grace;
And, saved from earth, appear
Before your Saviour's face:
The year of jubilee is come:
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home;"

then the faithful herald of this gospel, receiving the exhortation of his brethren around him, or rapt into a still higher and holier transport by the visions of his own faith, replying:

"Jesus, the Name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly;

"O that the world might taste and see
The riches of his grace;
The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace;

Digitized by Google

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim:
'Tis all my business here below
To cry—*Behold the Lamb!*

"Happy if with my latest breath
I may but gasp his name,
Preach him to all, and cry in death,
Behold, BEHOLD THE LAMB!"

There is no element of human experience, in fact, which Charles Wesley does not represent. The interior life of man, under all circumstances, and in every condition, seems to have been open to him; and he entered in, seeking out all the wants and woes, all the griefs and fears, all the hates and ills, all the sorrows, loves, and joys, for the purposes of his sacred verse. Having, in his own varied experience, passed through about every struggle and every successive victory of a soul in its progress from the lowest deep of sin to the loftiest summit of Christian love, he was not under the necessity of describing conflicts and successes which he had only seen in others, but could at once throw himself back upon his own spiritual life, and utter from the depths of his inward nature what had been indelibly recorded upon the tablet of his heart. It is the same egotism that we find continually in the lyrics of the Hebrew hymnists and particularly in the psalms of David. The monarch minstrel is forever saying: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." God's friends are his friends; God's enemies are his enemies; he makes himself the representative of every experience of which he writes; and his revelations of the heart of man are so abundant and complete, that there is not an individual of the race, in the church or out of it, who is not made to express in some degree his own internal character, and that in the language of the first person singular, by the habitual use of these sacred lyrics. Watts was the translator of these poems; he turned

Digitized by Google

them into English verse; but by this very process he was called upon to look out of himself and to describe what another man had felt; and it is this fact to which he owes that impersonality, that sensuousness, that pictorial and descriptive style, which, however they may leave him a great poet, make him to be so little of a real hymnist. Charles Wesley, on the other hand, was no translator. He borrowed but very little even from the Hebrew psalmists. He knew that Judaism, at best but a mere schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, had never known, and therefore had not expressed, the mature experiences of the latter and more perfect dispensation. He knew that he was writing for a special dispensation of the work of God on earth, which seemed to be more marked by personal religion, and by all the traits of the higher life, than had ever before been known by men. He knew that this new dispensation, from the beginning a mystery of divine providence, and all the while sweeping onward with an increasingly mysterious power, might one day embrace a greater multitude of the human family than ever pitched their tents on the hills and in the vales of Palestine. He saw, he felt, that he was the divinely-commissioned bard, the poet-laureate, of a sublime and growing revival of a heartfelt religion, which could not be satisfied with the feebler experience and fainter thanksgivings of a nation and an age gone by, but which yearned for the very last and highest possibility of the religious life, for the utmost of that real and personal work of the Almightly within the human soul, which constitutes the glory of the present period, and is to grow brighter and brighter till the millennial splendors shall break on the world like a second mid-day bursting on a former noon. He saw, he felt, that the songs to be written were to be written from the present, not from the past; from the heart, not from history; and that they were to be the hymns of a new era, such as every man would be liable to hear half-silently warbling upon the wind-swept strings of that lyre that every one carries in him, but which had never yet been

Digitized by Google

written down and set to music. The warblings were not to be the echoes of any Orphic, or Attic, or even Jewish harp. They were to come fresh from the trembling cords of the soul, brushed into existence by the hand of the Almighty, and sent out upon the sonorous air to become the *carmina sacra* of rising generations. They were to be original productions, brought into being by a new and more powerful application of the Spirit of God to a redeemed man, and received by an ever-increasing multitude of men, who should be prepared to understand and sing them by the same superior work of grace. Dr. Watts, in a word, is the chief of those lyric poets who echo to our times the melodies of the Hebrew bard, and whose verse endeavors to relieve itself of this second-hand character by mingling with the ideas borrowed from the poet-king such sensuous descriptions of natural objects as seem most nearly allied to sacred topics. Charles Wesley, on the contrary, is the chief of those lyric poets of modern times, whose leading trait is their originality, who write what they know and feel, and who feel and know, for themselves, and in themselves, whatever is most beautiful, and true, and good in the heartfelt influences of the gospel of the Son of God.*

* I am aware that this will appear to be a glowing estimate of the position of Charles Wesley as a lyric poet; it would be easy, however, to sustain the estimate by quoting the opinions of many of the most eminent English critics. Isaac Taylor, for example (Wesley and Methodism, p. 92), a writer not to be suspected of Methodistic prejudices, says: "It may be affirmed that there is no principal element of Christianity, no main article of belief, as professed by Protestant churches—that there is no moral or ethical sentiment peculiarly characteristic of the gospel—no hight or depth of feeling, proper to the spiritual life, that does not find itself emphatically, and pointedly, and clearly conveyed in some stanza of Charles Wesley's hymns." And again (Wesley and Methodism, p. 95) the critic of Methodism affirms: "Among those to whose compositions millions of souls owe inestimable benefits, in this manner, Charles Wesley stands, if not foremost, yet inferior to few." It is evident that Mr. Taylor regarded Charles Wesley inferior to none; but he deemed it less invidious to declare

Digitized by Google

If, now, the rank and power of English Methodism can stand upon the credit of having produced the greatest lyric poet of these latter ages, and that without going beyond the limits of the first Methodist family, we shall find within that family also another individual, whose literary position will constitute a proper climax to a condensed account of this unrivaled household. Like all his brothers and sisters, John Wesley was a poet. There was a period of his life when he wrote a great deal of poetry on general subjects; but, after his conversion, he devoted his muse mainly to lyric verse. He translated a number of the most devotional of German hymns; he composed several in English for the use of his societies; he aided his brother Charles by his cooler judgment and most judicious criticisms; and he made many and decided improvements in the best hymns of Dr. Watts.

his judgment in the subjunctive form; for, in another place, he just touches on the name of Watts, while he dwells on the merits of the bard of Methodism; and he closes up a very graphic picture of a Wesleyan congregation, singing the Wesleyan hymns, in very hearty words: "Thus it was that Charles Wesley, richly gifted as he was with graces, genius and talents, drew souls—thousands of souls—in his wake, from Sunday to Sunday; and he so drew them onward *from earth to heaven by the charm of sacred verse!*" He speaks of him as "*lofty, tender, pure, intense;*" and he says that his hymns created the existing epoch of lyric composition: "They may be regarded as the representatives of a modern devotional style, which has prevailed quite as much beyond the boundaries of the Wesleyan community, as within it." Nor did this seem to satisfy his sense of justice; but he proceeds, in direct terms, to place the Methodist poet quite in advance of the only rival he has ever had in the critical judgment of modern times: "Charles Wesley's hymns," says he (pp. 90–91,) "on the one hand, and those of Toplady, Cowper and Newton on the other, mark that great change in religious sentiment which distinguishes the times of Methodism from the staid nonconforming era of *Watts* and Doddridge." The verdict of Robert Southey, however (Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 101), whose work is considered as very unjust to Methodism, is still more to the point: "Perhaps no poems," he says, "have ever been so devoutly committed to memory as these, nor quoted so often upon a death-bed."

Digitized by Google

It has been seen how this last claim is sustained by the concession of Dr. Milner; but the learned admirer of the Calvinistic hymnist by no means makes a full acknowledgment of the critical services of Mr. Wesley upon the hymns of Dr. Watts in general, nor upon that particular masterpiece so proudly quoted by him. I wish the reader to see, however, the extent of what that acknowledgment should have been. I desire him to turn back, and read over again—and that in his very best style of reading—the hymn referred to, as published and left by Dr. Watts. Then I would like to have him, with the same voice and manner, and with a critical eye upon the corrections of Mr. Wesley, render the hymn as it now stands in the Methodist hymn-book:

"My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights:

"In darkest shades if thou appear
My dawning is begun;
Thou art my soul's bright morning star,
And thou my rising sun.

"The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss,
If Jesus shows his mercy mine,
And whispers I am his.

"My soul would leave this heavy clay
At that transporting word,
Run up with joy the shining way
To see and praise my Lord.

"Fearless of hell and ghastly death,
I'd break through every foe;
The wings of love and arms of faith
Would bear me conqueror through!"

There, reader is the master-piece of Dr. Watts as left by

Digitized by Google

Mr. Wesley. See how, by a few judicious touches, the spirit and power of the hymn are magnified! See how the poetical description is taken out of it, and the personality of real worship is put in! Watts, as if he were speaking to a third person, and giving him a history of his religious life, says:

"In darkest shades, if *he* appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's *sweet* morning star,
And *he* my rising sun."

That is mere description of something that has at former times taken place. It was such a poetic statement as was to have been expected of a theology, which makes a *past* experience a perpetual *hope*, or an unchangeable *assurance*, of a final perseverance and salvation. But no such worship could satisfy the heart of Wesley. He could not be satisfied with description; he did not trust to past experience; he insisted on a man's feeling and knowing for himself, at the present moment, what a Christian may know and feel; the sensuous *sweet* morning star must be conformed to the more correct language of revelation; the worship, too, must be carried on, not between the worshiper and his fellow-beings, to whom Watts supposes the singer to address himself, but between the soul of the worshiper and God:

"In darkest shades, if *Thou* appear,
My dawning is begun;
Thou art my soul's *bright* morning star,
And *Thou* my rising sun!"

Such are the alterations made upon this hymn. Such is the spirit of the numerous improvements effected by the poetical taste of Mr. Wesley upon all such hymns of Dr. Watts as were transferred by the founder of Methodism to the Wesleyan collection. Mr. Wesley took Watts' productions very much as a master at school, conscious of his supe

Digitized by Google

rior judgment, would take the productions of his pupils to correct them; and the very fact, that Isaac Watts can now be set up by his admirers as the rival, or superior, of the Wesleyan hymnist, has been made possible, to an extent not dreamed of by those of them not critically acquainted with the subject, by the silent and as yet unacknowledged labors of John Wesley.

The founder of Methodism, however, was not only a poet, but a scholar of the first class. He was a close student every day of his life, from early childhood to the very week he died. He enjoyed, it is true, while under his mother's tuition, and then in the most learned of the English universities, the highest educational advantages of his generation. But his best resource for intellectual cultivation was his indefatigable industry and perseverance, in which he never was excelled. For more than seventy years, including the long period of his itinerant labors, during which he was accustomed to preach several times a day, he read more pages than any other man in England. From the hour he entered the charter-house school, till he ceased to breathe, the two boundaries of a space of time longer than the allotted life of man, his taper could be seen burning in his room till about ten at night, and from the hour of four every morning. He read at his meals, on his walks, while riding in his carriage, and on horseback. It was thus that he realized what was only dreamed of by another great scholar of his country. It was a remark of Dr. Bentley, the first classical scholar of Great Britain, that he could read all the books in the world worth reading, would the Lord but give him eighty years of life and health. This eighty years of life and health, and that after he became a reader, were enjoyed by Mr. Wesley; and every day of it was spent, though in the midst of many other labors, in perusing those standard productions of the great minds of every age, so desired to be studied by Dr. Bentley. He thus became a universal scholar; he mastered the circle of human

Digitized by Google

knowledge. There was no work of commanding genius, or ability, or learning, in any language then read by the most erudite of his generation, whose merits de did not know, and whose contents he did not understand. Though skilled in at least five of the languages of literary Europe, besides the classic and oriental tongues of antiquity, his favorite, next to his vernacular, was the German; and he was the man who, more than all men preceding or following him, introduced to the literature of England and America the works of the great Teutonic masters. He opened the era, since made illustrious by a score or two of English and American *literati*, which now blesses the literature of both countries, and the inauguration of which has been falsely ascribed to such men as S. T. Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle. The German era in English literature is the work of Mr. Wesley. Long before Carlyle or Coleridge, or any of their Teutonizing predecessors, had seen the light of day, John Wesley began to translate into English the hymnology and theology of the German fatherland. If there is anything beneficent, therefore, anything of promise, in the existing tendency of the English and American mind—and, in fact, of the mind of the existing literary nations—to look into the literature of that remarkable people, whose poets, critics, historians and scholars are the wonder and glory of the modern world, it is but simple justice to say that the first distinguished example of it is to be found in the poetic and theological researches in the German language, made by Mr. Wesley. He was struggling, it is true, when making these researches, not for literary information but for spiritual light. He had made the acquaintance of several Moravian Christians, whose religious experience inspired him with admiration; he took a tour to their settlements in Germany; he conversed with the most intelligent of their number; he perfected himself in the reading and speak- of their language; he went on, from this beginning, to form social connections with the leading reformers and scholars of

Digitized by Google

their country; he visited and conversed with such men as Count Zinzendorf and Swedenborg; and when he returned to England, he brought back what he ever after cherished, not only a better idea of practical Christianity, but that zeal for the cultivation of German letters which, from him, has spread all over Europe, and over the continent of America, and into every land now visited by the missionaries and naturalists of the enlightened nations of the world.

John Wesley was a literary man, not only by education, by taste, and by the accidents of his position, but by the manifold productions of his pen. There is scarcely any work performed by an author, which was not performed, and that most copiously, by him. He was a diligent translator; he was equally industrious as an editor and annotator; he compiled, abridged and expanded books beyond the possibility of enumeration; and his original works, which are mainly literary and theological, and yet covering nearly every practical issue of his day, whether social, educational, political, or religious, if all printed out in the style now prevalent, would of themselves make a larger collection than the average of professional men find themselves, in this country, able to possess. There are at this moment standing upon my shelves an entire edition of the Greek and Roman classics, embracing every extant work of standard reputation from the Orphica attributed to the monarch-bard of Thrace to the epistles and essays of Erasmus, and including every master-piece of the human mind for about three thousand years of time. I have before me, also a catalogue of all the publications of every kind made by Mr. Wesley; and my judgment is, from such experience as I have had with books, that, if issued in the modern style, they would cover very nearly if not quite as much space, on the adjoining shelves, as is occupied by this entire collection of the extant literature of Greek and Roman fame. This, however, if found to be a fact, would be of inferior value to the fame of Wesley as a literary man, if

Digitized by Google

his original productions were not known to be of the first order of merit. They are indeed, as many of my readers know by their own examination, of the highest rank. They do not need the reputation of their author, as the great reformer of modern times, and as the founder of the largest religious denomination now existing in Protestant christendom, to raise or to hold them to this rank. The writings of John Wesley, from the off-hand journal of his life and labors, to the most elaborate of his productions, are marked by many of the rarest qualities of a great and comprehensive intellect. This is no fulsome eulogy. Though it will be impossible, in a production of this comprehensive and summary character, to give an analysis of Mr. Wesley's works by way of justifying the claim here made, it is particularly satisfactory that there is little or no need of any such critical examination of an author, whose works have been in print for more than a hundred years, and which have been read, either in their native dress, or in translations, all over Europe, throughout the continent of America, and in more distant lands, by a multitude of the inhabitants of this earth, rich and poor, ignorant and learned, quite beyond the reach of accurate computation. Were the task imposed upon me to make discovery of a solitary writer whose publications have been perused, in part, or in whole, by as many persons as have been some or all of the works of the Reverend John Wesley, I should not know what one to name. Think of him as a lyric poet; think of him as a tractarian; think of him as a dignified and yet popular pamphleteer; think of him as a successful controversialist; think of him as the translator, compiler, annotator, and abridger of the great productions of his age and of former ages; think of him as an original author of a large number of standard volumes, whose sale, at first sufficient to make him a power in England, has been steadily and rapidly increasing for two or three generations; think of the ten or twelve millions of the present generation, at this moment

Digitized by Google

adhering to his principles, who read something of him—a hymn, a note, a tract, or the page of some publication—nearly every day they live; think how he is read on every Sabbath, all over North America, in South America, in the leading languages of Europe, at all missionary stations of Methodism throughout the world, and on the bosom of the great waters; and then tell me what personage, ancient or modern, I am to mention as his competitor. Some of the more popular of our novelists will probably be first thought of in this connection. The author of Uncle Tom has been actually set up as the most read of any writer of modern times. But what is the spasmodic reading of a year or two, however widely spread, compared with this constant perusal and daily use of the works of Wesley, which began to appear more than a century ago, and which are now more admired and read than in either of their three generations of popularity? The Waverley novels may be thought of; but Wesley is more read than Walter Scott. The psalms and hymns of Dr. Watts may be mentioned; and had John Wesley been only a hymnist, the reference might be sufficient; but Watts is used only in the English language, and in one particular exercise, while Wesley is read in English, French and German, the three universal languages, and on nearly every great social topic. The immortal allegory of the Bedford tinker may claim the palm; and the Progress of the Pilgrim, without doubt, has really as many readers as any one extant production outside of the Bible; but it is, after all, only a single work, on a single topic, and adapted to the taste of a particular class of readers; while the productions of John Wesley are multitudinous, ranging from the heavy tome to the penny tract, and from the select of sacred subjects to those secular and popular themes, which, not only immediately but permanently, affect the millions of every generation in every reading country. Wesley is more read than Milton, or Shakspeare, or even Homer—not because he

Digitized by Google

gives evidence of greater literary genius—but because his productions are religious works, which are always more widely circulated than publications on any other subject. There are but few in any nation capable of appreciating and enjoying even its own great classics. Kepler was willing to wait for centuries for a single reader; and Herodotus is perused by a larger number now than in the days of the Greek republics. It is not the antiquity of a writer, however, nor the time that he has occupied before the public, nor his literary merit even, which gives him the precedence for popularity as an author. The works of John Wesley are at this time more read, as I judge from a laborious calculation of the probable number of literary men in the existing literary nations, than are all the Greek and Roman classics, from Orpheus to the flight of the Byzantine literati at the capture and fall of Constantinople; and I do not hesitate to challenge the most competent of my readers, who know anything of the popularity of Mr. Wesley's works, to follow me in this computation. In fact, John Wesley, whose father was the first to give popularity to English literature, by founding the first literary periodical of his language, still maintains the credit of his race by being the most popular of recent writers; and his popularity is based on such solid merits, as well as seconded by such growing power of the people called into confederate existence by him, that he is destined to be, more and more as the world advances, for his genius and his success combined, the flag-holder of English letters, the prince-regent of modern authors!

The earliest literary friend of English Methodism, outside of the Wesley family, was the Rev. Jean Guillaume de la Flechere, commonly known under his English name of the Rev. John Fletcher, a native of Switzerland, a graduate of Geneva, a gentleman of first-class abilities, a Christian of the most perfect and spotless purity, and an author of great industry and reputation. He "was a man," says Southey,

Digitized by Google

"of rare talents and rarer virtue. No age or country has ever produced a man of more fervent piety, or more perfect charity. No church has ever possessed a more apostolic minister." Mr. Fletcher was the defender of Methodism against outside attacks. If it was assailed as "a doctrine of devils," in the language of Toplady, one look to the "saint of Madely," as Mr. Fletcher has been styled, was enough to show the nature of its fruit. When assailed by argument, a more rare thing at the first, Mr. Fletcher's pen was at once relied on as was the spear of Achilles, which, according to the classic fable, could heal by its touch whom its thrusts had wounded. As a controversialist, Mr. Fletcher had this double power of laying an antagonist at his feet by the force of his great learning and resistless logic, and then raising him to self-respect, and to a respect for the system assaulted, by the power of a beautiful charity that never failed. The theology of John Calvin was, at that time, the prevailing theology of Europe, Luther having derived its substance from the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustin, and the Geneva doctors having perfected and propagated it in full over the leading nations of the world. It was this system which Methodism was called first to meet; for the Calvinistic divines united in an attack upon the Wesleyan theology of free grace, free will, and freedom of belief, more virulent than had been witnessed in the Christian church since the day of Tetzel. Wesley was too busy with his work of overseeing the great revival, which was spreading over England and into Ireland and Scotland, to manage the defense; and so Mr. Fletcher took up his pen, and wrote incessantly, till near the day of his death, in reply to the assaults of Calvinism and in support of the Wesleyan faith. No man could be better qualified for this important work. With those "rare talents" mentioned by Dr. Southey, there was coupled an education, obtained at the fountain-head of Calvinism, which gave him every advantage to be desired for this peculiar duty. He

Digitized by Google

had heard Calvinism from his cradle; he had studied it under its ablest representatives then living; he had spent years in comparing it with the word of God; he had rejected it after the most laborious examination in the light of revelation and of reason; and his convictions had been so clear, so positive, so potent, that he had openly renounced it before the world. He now siezed the weapon of the scholar, more powerful than battle-ax or sword, and wrote out a series of defenses, since known as Checks to Antinomianism, which left nothing to be done in that direction; and if the ten volumes of Mr. Fletcher are now not as much read, as they were in the day they were written and published, as has been disparagingly stated by Mr. Taylor, it is simply because they have performed their office in routing this class of the antagonists of Methodism from the "tented field." The "temper" in which "this saintly man" carried on this controversy was only equalled by that "distinguished ability" which Mr. Southey discovered in his productions; and the poet-laureate of England, though no friend to Methodism, ascribes to Mr. Fletcher a genius which the controversialist had no chance to use. "His talents," he says, "were of the quick, mercurial kind; his fancy was always active; and he might have held no inconsiderable rank, both as a humorous and as an impassioned writer, if he had not confined himself wholly to devotional subjects." And Isaac Taylor, in the midst of the severest criticisms, admits this much: "If it be asked," he says, "what this Methodism is, about which the world, even now, has come to no settled opinion, an equitable reply may be obtained at Madely. The Methodism of Fletcher was Christianity, as little lowered by admixture of human infirmity, as we may hope to find anywhere on earth;" and if any reader wishes to verify all this just eulogy of the religious character, and intellectual ability, and literary eminence of this defender of early Methodism, I must refer him to Mr. Fletcher's works, which, in

Digitized by Google

spite of the assertion of his opponents, are still looked to as the most unanswerable argument to be furnished from the controversial productions of the modern Church.

Nearly at the same time that the Madely saint became a Methodist, the Wesleyan doctrine was espoused by the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., a clergyman of the Church of England, and a scholar of British reputation. Dr. Coke is styled by Taylor "an apostolic man;" he was the founder of the Wesleyan missions; he gave up not only his person and his talents, but his fame, his ambition, and his fortune, which was very large, to the support and promotion of the Wesleyan reformation; while his writings show that he might have reached the loftiest eminence among the *literati* of England, had his conscience been weak enough to give full scope to the natural aspirations of his intellect. His style as a writer is exceedingly neat, though plain and unambitious; it is oftentimes elegant, dignified, and strong, while it carries every mark of a want of effort; and it abounds with proofs of his great learning and severe mental discipline. It is certain that the man, who crossed the ocean eighteen times, between England and the United States, in the prosecution of his missionary work, and who had the entire management of the Wesleyan missions in their most critical period, could have but little time for literary undertakings; and yet, so natural is it for an educated and enterprising person to employ his pen, that he became, in spite of all these labors, quite a voluminous author. His Commentary on the Scriptures, begun at the special request of his denomination, has excellences peculiar to itself; and my opinion is, that its real value has never been appreciated, not even by the Methodists. His Life of Wesley, written in conjunction with the Rev. Henry More, has taken its true place among the most valuable of the memoirs of that great man; but his most distinguished work, by which he is known in literary circles throughout the world, is his History of the West

Digitized by Google

Indies, comprised in three octavo volumes, and containing the natural, civil, and ecclesiastical history of each island, from the commencement of the European settlements upon them; and in this production is seen the most abundant evidence of great natural abilities, developed by the widest cultivation, refined by art, and furnished with the most liberal supplies of accurate and useful information.

It is a common prejudice, raised by the enemies of Mr. Wesley in the Church of England, and propagated by designing men ever since, that the lay-preachers employed by English Methodism, because not educated expressly for the pulpit, were men of mean origin and of no cultivation. This, however, is a great mistake. Mr. Wesley knew too well the advantages of mental discipline to place his cause into the hands of ignorant and stupid plodders; and Dr. Southey, in spite of his leaning against Methodism, has devoted a couple of his finest chapters to a biographical account of several of this class of the Wesleyan preachers, whom he presents as specimens of the whole body of them. He speaks of John Oliver, John Pawson, Alexander Mather, Thomas Olivers, George Story, Thomas Walsh, and others, as persons of highly cultivated minds, though they had been, prior to their employment by Mr. Wesley, brought up to business. They were like Grant and Radcliffe, the Scotch lay-preachers of the present generation, whom the Kirk of Scotland honors with its patronage, while they return still greater honor to the Kirk by the use of their rich intellectual gifts and religious graces in calling sinners to repentance. In the same way, Mr. Wesley set to work a great amount of pious talent, which the professional clergy of Great Britain decried and misrepresented; and there was among this class of men, besides their native keenness of mind given them by their business habits, a large amount of real learning. It often happens that there is a layman in the congregation of a regularly educated cler-

Digitized by Google

gyman, who, for natural abilities, and even for the extent of knowledge, is more than a match for his religious teacher; and the thing peculiar in Mr. Wesley's plan of operations was, that, whenever he saw such men truly converted to God, and zealous to do what they could in the spread of practical religion, he had the discretion and the courage to employ them. Of the persons I have mentioned, whom Dr. Southey singles out as representatives of their fellows, John Pawson, Alexander Mather, and Thomas Olivers, were individuals of more than ordinary education; while John Oliver and George Story had received a still more liberal cultivation; and Thomas Walsh, according to the decision of Mr. Wesley, a competent judge in such a matter, was one of the most learned men of his country and generation. John Wesley might be supposed to have had some ambition of being considered the ablest scholar of his connection; but he freely sets Thomas Walsh, a man whose name is scarcely known in the world of letters, above himself in point of erudition, and in one department of knowledge above every man of his acquaintance. He represents him as being profoundly learned in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and "so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible that, if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a brief pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but what it meant in every place. Such a master of Biblical knowledge," he says, "he never saw before, and never expected to see again." Such men as these, learned but lost to the literary world in their higher work of calling sinners to repentance, have been continually springing up on the itinerant field of Methodism; and their number has been so great, that, since the origin of the Wesleyan movement, the general scholarship of their day might have been matched by those of their own occupation, whose social position was very humble, and whose names, if

Digitized by Google

added to the brief list already given, would be as unknown to many of my readers as the names of the literary characters of China or Japan!

There were enough of these lay-preachers of early Methodism, however, whose learning found a recognition and a record in literary circles, not only to redeem the denomination in England from the false charge of illiteracy, but to give it a high credit among the reading and knowing classes. It would be useless to spend any time in detailing the learned labors of Dr. Adam Clarke, an itinerant preacher, who was everywhere known as the most erudite man of the world in his day; his Commentary on the Scriptures, a work of six quarto volumes, concentrates the substance of all available knowledge to the single purpose of illustrating and confirming the truths of revelation; his published discourses are among the most able of those now existing in the English language; and his miscellaneous productions prove him still more abundantly to have been a man worthy of his world-wide reputation. Next to Dr. Clarke, if not before him, English Methodism cherishes the memory of the Rev. Richard Watson, whose talents were of the highest order, and whose learning was equal to the most profound of literary undertakings; his Institutes of Religion is a work of wide design, of vast research, and of the most happy execution; his Sermons, collected in several volumes, rank higher in the denomination than those of Dr. Clarke, and as argumentative productions higher than those of Mr. Wesley; his Theological Dictionary is remarkable for the amount and accuracy of its information, for its exhaustive manner of treating subjects, and yet for the almost unexampled condensation of its articles; and he showed himself, in every work he published, at once a scholar, a theologian, and a philosopher, with a breadth of view like that of Bacon, and with a ratiocinative genius as profound, as patient, as penetrating, as that of Locke. In the same connection stands the name of the Rev. Joseph

Digitized by Google

Benson, another itinerant preacher, of whom it is enough to say, that, in England, his sermons are read with unabated enthusiasm, and his Commentary on the Holy Scriptures still published in every variety of form, and sold in uncounted quantities, takes precedence among the English Wesleyans of the more learned but less practical work of his celebrated fellow-laborer; and these three names alone are sufficient, in a chapter that must hasten to its termination, to assure the reader that the middle period of English Methodism more than sustained the reputation given it by that inaugurating period, of which Thomas Coke, Thomas Walsh, and the Wesleys, were the literary representatives.

Nor must it be thought that these specimens of rare attainments are confined to the former days of English Methodism. This is not so; indeed, the present period is an era in its literary character; there is a wealth of literary men, and of literary productions, which Methodism in Great Britain has never before witnessed; and there are many writers with pens which are ever active, and whose productions have acquired a British and American reputation. By a little attention to the subject for the last few years, I have been able to gather the names of more than one hundred and fifty living writers, ministers and members of the English Wesleyan connection, who deserve respectable positions in the catalogue of British authors. They all merit a recognition in these pages; but the list is too lengthy, and I must content myself with a brief reference to a very few who, for accidental reasons, as well as for their abilities, are known about equally well on both sides of the Atlantic. There is the Rev. William Arthur, D.D., a young man of extraordinary intellect, whose Successful Merchant, Tongue of Fire, and other works, have given him a commanding place among religious writers. There is the Rev. John Beecham, D.D., whose Recovery of a Lost World, Remarks on Colonization, Remarks on Official Documents relating to New Zealand,

Digitized by Google

and Visit to British America, have furnished proof of a great variety of first-class talent. The Rev. Jabez Bunting, D. D., the strongest man of English Methodism since the death of Wesley, too full of general labor to admit of much composition, has yet exhibited the best order of literary ability in his Memorials of the Rev. Richard Watson. The Rev. George Cubitt, an untitled man, but worthy of almost any title, in his Dialogues, and his Outlines for Pulpit Preparation, and in twelve or more distinct publications, has taken a prominent place in his particular department. The Methodism in America, by the Rev. James Dixon, D.D., and several occasional Discourses, have justified a reputation which is as well established in the United States as in England. The Rev. Dr. Etheridge, a distinguished orientalist, has given to the world the Syrian Churches, their Early History, Liturgies and Literature, with a Translation of the Four Gospels; Horæ Armoricæ, Apostolical Acts and Epistles, with a Translation of St. Matthew and of Hebrews, from the Ancient Syriac; Jerusalem and Tiberias, Sora and Cordova, a Survey of the Learning of the Jews, designed as an Introduction to the Study of Hebrew Literature, and the best life of Dr. Adam Clarke extant. The Rev. Thomas Jackson, D.D., is a more versatile author, among whose works are the following: Answer to the Question, Why are you a Wesleyan Methodist; Christian Presbyters, their Office, Duties and Rewards; Faithful Minister of Christ passing to his Final Reward; Fulfillment of the Christian Ministry; Letter to Dr. E. B. Pusey, being a Vindication of the Tenets and Character of the Wesleyan Methodists against his Misrepresentations and Censures; Wesleyan Methodism a Revival of Apostolical Christianity; Expository Discourses on Scripture Facts and Characters; the Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, comprising a Review of his Poetry, Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Methodism, with Notices of Contemporary Events and Characters; and the Duties of Christianity theoretically and

Digitized by Google

practically considered, a work on Moral Philosophy, and the ablest of his productions. The name of the Rev. F. A. West, D.D., is known in this connection for a model specimen of biography, the Memoirs of Mrs. Gibson, and for a variety of Lectures, Sermons and Addresses. The Rev. F. J. Jobson, D.D., in his America and American Methodism, his Chapel and School Architecture, and his Mother's Portrait, has earned the position of a useful and attractive writer. The Rev. G. Turner has manifested no inconsiderable degree of critical and logical talent in his Constitution of Methodism, his Democratic Ecclesiasticism, his Divine Validity of Infant Baptism, his Old Protestant Doctrine of Justification by Faith Attested, and in several smaller publications. The Rev. A. Scott, professor in one of the Wesleyan theological institutions, has published two courses of Sermons, which stand very high as learned and masterly productions. The Rev. Robert Young's Australia and Tasmania, and his New Zealand and Polynesia, are works sought after by the highest class of readers in Great Britain. The Rev. J. H. Rigg, a gentleman beginning to be well known in the United States, has evinced in his Independency and Methodism Contrasted, and in his Essay on the Principles of Methodism, a tact and talent as a writer which the most accomplished author of the age might afford to covet. But I must not blunt the edge of a just eulogy by drawing out this list to any greater length; and time would fail me, should I attempt to bring out the individual merits of such writers as Marsden, and Sleigh, and Prest, and Vevers, and Williams, and the three Jacksons, and Fish, and Kendall, and Treffry, and Steele, and Naylor, and Keeling, and Booth, and Bedford, and Hannah, and Atherton, and Wiseman, and of the scores of other gentlemen now living, whose pens have adorned the literature of English Methodism; but there are yet a couple of Wesleyan authors whose productions cannot be passed over with a slight remark, or the bare record of their names. The first to be mentioned

Digitized by Google

is the Rev. W. H. Rule, D.D., whose ten or twelve octavo volumes embrace a range of topics really remarkable, and whose style of execution is so easy and yet so learned, so fluent while it is yet so thorough, that it would be no extravagance to set this Wesleyan writer among the stars in the galaxy of British authorship; and the second, the Rev. G. Smith, F.A.S., etc, a still more voluminous and able writer—the most voluminous, in fact, and the ablest of the literary men of English Methodism since the death of Watson—is received in England, and honored in her learned societies and circles, as one of the most brilliant lights in the firmament of her literary glory. These two writers alone, indeed, with Etheridge and Jackson, would be enough to hold up the standard of the literature of English Methodism; while it must be evident that its entire amount is sufficient to give to the Wesleyan movement in Great Britain, so far as the pen can confer strength and position to any enterprise, a rank and power of no secondary consideration for so young a people. It has been quite generally imagined, I know, even by those admitting the high paternity of English Methodism, and the rank it received from the intellectual character of its founders, that its social position was at once lost in consequence of failing to maintain its original literary splendor; and I have written this chapter for the purpose of showing, as far as possible in so summary a manner, that, instead of declining in this respect, it has been steadily waxing stronger, till it now occupies a well-fortified position in the literature of the English language. That Methodism, at its origin, was driven from the English cathedrals and parish churches to the masses of the population, and even to the most degraded of those masses, is its boast and glory; it took this direction, and wrought its miracles among the multitude, there is no doubt, by the order of a far-seeing Providence; but it has, nevertheless, long since raised itself to a noticeable rank for general intelligence; while it has never seen a day when its original

Digitized by Google

position, as a religious movement begun and carried on by gentlemen of educated genius, has not been successfully maintained in the persons of a never-failing line of learned men of more than ordinary eminence.'

The religious character and literary labors of English Methodism, however, have not been alone in giving its rank and power with the British public. Piety has weight chiefly with serious people; and literature is a permanent influence only with the reading classes; but oratory, eloquence, the power of appeal to the masses of a population, carries everybody along with it without a moment's delay—without a particle of preparation or reflection. And oratory has been

[1] The American reader will doubtless be glad to look upon a list of the more valuable works of Drs. Rule and Smith, the former of whom has published the following: The Brand of Dominic, a History of the Inquisition, in 1 vol., crown octavo; Celebrated Jesuits, in 2 vols., 18mo.; Martyrs of the Reformation,' a History of the Martyrdoms, Confessions and Sufferings, from the Dawn of the Reformation to the Nineteenth Century, in 1 vol., octavo; Studies from History, in 2 vols., crown octavo; The Third Crusade, 1 vol., crown octavo; The Fall of the Greek Empire, with an Account of the Council of Florence, convened to unite the Latin and Greek Churches, 1 vol., crown octavo; Dawn of the Reformation, with Events of the Reign of Pope Alexander VI., 1 vol., crown octavo; and the Spirit of the Reformation, in 1 vol., crown octavo, besides numerous editions of works of eminence written by other authors. Dr. Smith's list of works shows a mind of altogether another cast. They are the Chronology of Genesis, 1 vol.; Doctrine of the Cherubim, 1 vol., crown octavo; Doctrine of the Pastorate, in two editions, one in one vol., crown octavo, the other in smaller covers; Harmony of the Divine Dispensations, 1 vol., crown octavo; History of Wesleyan Methodism, in 2 vols., crown octavo; Origin of Alphabetical Characters, 1 vol.; Perilous Times, 1 vol., duodecimo; Religion of Ancient Britain Historically Considered, 1 vol., crown octavo; Wesleyan Polity, 1 vol.; Wesleyan Local Preachers, 1 vol.; the Patriarchal Age, 1 vol.; the Hebrew People, 1 vol.; and the Gentile Nations, 1 vol.; and I may remark that the three last mentioned works are each large volumes of crown octavo. It should also be added that nearly all the productions of these two writers have not only been read and admired but republished in the United States.

Digitized by Google

the particular glory of Methodism, from its origin; it is a remarkable historic fact, from which a philosopher will derive a topic for patient examination, that the greatest of British orators for the last hundred and twenty years have been Wesleyan preachers. This, I know, is at first sight a startling declaration, and may seem like the language of puerile assumption; but the reader will find, I think, by a careful investigation, that I have uttered but the sober truth. Is it not universally admitted that George Whitefield was the prince of modern eloquence? This, according to Dr. Franklin, was his rank in England and in the United States; and if Whitefield had any competitor, that competitor was the Rev. John Wesley, who was styled the "mover of men's consciences," as his fellow-laborer was called the "mover of men's passions." Mr. Wesley's other powers were so distinguished, that his eloquence has received less attention than it merits; but Dr. Southey states distinctly, in many places, that the sermons of Wesley were attended by greater and more lasting effects than those of Whitefield. These two men were followed also by a host of speakers in Great Britain, whose pulpit oratory was beyond all competition. Thomas Walsh was an orator, as well as a scholar of the first distinction; and he was surrounded and succeeded by men of his own order, who had no rivals in the pulpits, or in the halls of legislation, of their country. Then came a class of preachers whose representative may be seen in the burning but tempered eloquence of Joseph Benson, who, according to all contemporary statements, was the wonder and delight of his generation. Another class of Wesleyan orators is represented to us in the clear statement, close argumentation, ample knowledge and illustration, and mighty utterance of Richard Watson, whose discourses are yet read as among the most able in the English language. Next to Watson came a whole platform of Wesleyan orators, signaled to us by the Rev. Drs. Bunting, Dixon and Newton, who, with

Digitized by Google

those of their class, held an American as well as European reputation. Dr. Dixon is still among the living; and by his side there have sprung up a band of more recent preachers, who, as a body, maintain the full ascendency of Wesleyan oratory before the English public. We have heard, on this side of the water, the stirring tones of the Rev. Dr. Arthur, who is acknowledged as one of the ablest pulpit and platform speakers now in Europe; and we have seen him followed from city to city, and from one appointment to another, by crowds of admiring listeners. But Mr. Arthur, at home, is only one of many of his own rank, whose ministrations are sought after with the greatest enthusiasm, and celebrated all over England. Perhaps the leading orator of English Wesleyanism, at the present moment, is the Rev. Mr. Punshon, whose style of speaking is more captivating than that of any other clergyman in Great Britain.[8] His only rival for popularity is the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon, whose sermons are certainly attracting an attention due only to genius of the highest mark; but Spurgeon, whatever it is

[8] The power and splendor of Mr. Punshon's oratory may be inferred from the offer made him by the noted P. T. Barnum, whose sagacity as a caterer to the popular taste is not to be disputed, whatever may be said of him as a member of society. "Strange as it may appear," says an English correspondent of an American newspaper, "your American Barnum has made Mr. Punshon a serious offer of £2000 a year to accompany him to America and give lectures under Barnum's direction and supervision. No one but Barnum would have the impudence to have made an approach to Mr. Punshon, of such an unhallowed kind. Mr. Punshon's reply consisted simply in writing 'Acts xiii. 10,' and sending it to Barnum." On turning to the Scriptures, the reader will find the following pertinent language: "Oh, full of all subtlety and mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" The incident shows, however, that in the eyes of this showman, who has manifested great skill in his operations, Mr. Punshon is at least among the most popular, if it does not indicate that he is the most popular, of British orators at the present moment.

Digitized by Google

which calls such multitudes to hear him, is not an orator; while Punshon is renowned, not only for the immense gatherings summoned together by his popularity, but for nearly every quality that enters into the composition of a beautiful and powerful public speaker. The truth of it is, in a word, that from Punshon all the way back to Whitefield, from George Smith to John Wesley, through more than a full century of the better part of the history of Great Britain, English Methodism has recommended itself to the masses of the population, and maintained its original eminence in the judgment of the higher classes, by its religious character, by its literary achievements, and by a line of orators more illustrious than can be produced from the annals of any similar community, since the death of Luther. And the result of it all is, that its half million of industrious, pious, energetic membership, and with the national church disintegrating and falling to ruin all around it, the rank and power of Methodism in England are really equal, though nominally holding a second place, and will soon be more than equal, to the position and influence of any religious denomination, either in England, or on the eastern shores of the Atlantic.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

RANK AND POWER OF AMERICAN METHODISM.

The first seeds of Methodism in America were scattered by the two Wesleys, and by that prince of modern pulpit orators, George Whitefield; and the seed sprang up, bearing in good time no little fruit. But these men, and the boundless excitement produced by them among the people of the new world, passed away; their places were left vacant; the cold and motionless orthodoxy of the day chilled the enthusiasm of the little bands of Methodists which had started up in different localities; and the cause approached a dissolution almost in the hour of its origin. The loose habits of religious thinking, and the martial as well as worldly spirit entailed by the Revolutionary struggle, continued and increased the difficulty of keeping American Methodism alive, till a more genial influence should dawn upon it. It did survive, however; and the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., an English gentleman of fortune and of high literary position, was sent by Mr. Wesley to superintend the work of resuscitating and spreading Methodism in the young republic. The Rev. Francis Asbury was associated with Dr. Coke in this great undertaking; and it was immediately discovered that the junior superintendent possessed, not only the qualities fitting him for his post of duty, but a remarkable genius for it. He surpassed, in fact, his colleague in every department of their labor; but they worked together with surprising success; they traveled, and preached, and gathered societies in every quarter and section of the country; they made their mission to be felt among all classes of our citizens; their trumpet notes were heard from the At-

Digitized by Google

lantic seaboard over the Blue and Alleghany mountains, and far into the depths of the endless and unbroken forest of the great interior; they were listened to with respect by the leading men, and with rapt interest by the humbler populace, of every region; and we find them, not long after their promotion to this joint business, introducing their cause to the favorable attention of the first officers of the Federal Government, and receiving the approbation and blessing, from his own hand, of the Father of his Country.

This, certainly, was a very good beginning; but it is not to be supposed that American Methodism enjoyed the same rank, or exerted the same power, in the hands of all its representatives. The truth of it is, that, in this country as in England, it grew more rapidly than the ability of the denomination to furnish just such representatives as its character and wants demanded. There was a call for its heralds constantly coming to its superintending bishops, and that growing every hour in earnestness and volume, from every quarter of the land; it waxed more and more intense and unmanageable by every advance effected in the general enterprise; every revival, every sermon, added to its force; and the consequence was, that, when the people could not find men educated expressly for the pulpit by a long course of college training, they would not wait for them to rise up out of the work itself, nor yet be denied the help of those, who, in any manner, could point them the way to heaven. It would be a very great mistake, however, to set these early ministers of American Methodism down as a class of ignorant men, without any qualifications for their exalted work. The very opposite of this is the simple fact. They were not, as a general thing, skilled in those departments of human learning lying outside of the system of practical theology; but within this particular field, they were remarkable for their ability and information; they were adepts, also, in the knowledge of human nature; and their success in preaching a new set of theologi-

Digitized by Google

cal opinions, and in brushing away the established opinions of the regions which they undertook to cultivate, is a sufficient demonstration of their superiority, in every essential element of a ministerial preparation, to the clergy of the older denominations. If called upon to deliver scientific lectures, or pronounce orations in which style is of more consequence than truth, or figure in any way as merely literary characters, they would have been found deficient; and consequently they were habitually overlooked, or unfelt, in the general purposes of social life; but, in their own calling of preaching the gospel, of stating and defending their theological doctrines, of reaching and rousing the slumbering energies of the moral nature, thay had no equals. "Classical learning," says Judge McLean "is of great value, and should be acquired, if practicable, by every individual who aims at a professional life. But this learning does not qualify an individual for the high duties of the pulpit, or the bar. There must be a deeper knowledge, which can only be attained by much reading and mature reflection. An individual who is brought in contact with men, and whose aim it is to influence them, must become acquainted with the sympathies of human nature; and he must possess those sympathies in a high degree, or his efforts will be in vain. How often have we seen men in the pulpit, with great zeal, and in a vociferous manner, speak for hours without producing any other effect than weariness on their hearers. Such a speaker, however zealous, is a stranger to those gushing emotions of the heart, which, with an electric effect, are imparted to the auditory. He may be instructive; he may string his sentences together, and embody all the figures of rhetoric; but he can never reach and overcome the citadel of the heart; and, unless he can do this, he can never become a successful instrument of reform." The learned author of these remarks is drawing the contrast, not by accident but design, between the college-bred ministers of the older sects

Digitized by Google

and the self-made ministry of Methodism in the early times; he is himself a noble representative of those times; he has enjoyed, too, the singular advantage, not only of comparing the clergy of all the different denominations of this country on the largest scale, but the clergy of at least two generations; and he distinctly gives the preference, for all the qualities of an efficient discharge of their proper duties, to the Methodist ministry over every other of his native land. After giving them as a class this eulogy, he mentions several eminent examples. He says of the Rev. John Collins, a name almost wholly unknown to American society at large, that he possessed, in a most eminent degree, nearly all the qualities of head and heart essential to a powerful and successful speaker; and, though a most cautious writer, whose sentences seem to come from him as if they had been written on the bench, he proceeds so far as to place the Rev. William McKendree, another name not known in the literary or scientific circles of the United States, at the head of American pulpit orators during the generation that has just passed away. "Bishop McKendree," he says, "was not a classical scholar; and yet there has not appeared in the Methodist connection a finer model as a preacher. He was eloquent in the true sense of the term. Few men *ever* filled the pulpit with greater dignity and usefulness; and the beautiful simplicity of his sermons was, perhaps, *unequaled in our country*."[1]

This is high eulogy to be pronounced upon a man who was scarcely recognized as an orator at all outside of his own denomination; and it may be thought that the verdict of the judge, in this case, was influenced in favor of the eloquent bishop by the fact, that both were distinguished Methodists. The truth doubtless is, however, that the judgment is less favorable from this very circumstance; for every reader of

[1] Copied for the author from Zion's Herald of March 20, 1850, by F. Rand, Esq.

Digitized by Google

genuine sensibility will see how unwelcome it must be to a truly modest man, and to every person of any pretensions in the world, to claim for his own friends what they really merit; and the fear of being accused of exaggeration must have contributed an additional motive for an excess, not of panegyric, but of moderation. Bishop McKendree was, without contradiction, one of the great pulpit orators of his generation; and the class of our early preachers, at the head of which he stood, could furnish in Jesse Lee, in Freeborn Garretson, in the Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D., and in their associates, a much abler ministry, for all the legitimate purposes of the pulpit, than could have been selected from the contemporaneous churches of the continent.[1]

Methodism, expressed in the form of a general proposition, is a universal salvation provided for the people, and addressed directly to them. There is nothing limited, narrow, or partial in it. It calls upon every class of men, from the prince to the humblest peasant, to listen and believe. There is no condition of moral character, either so high, or so abject, as to

[1] Judge McLean, in his contrast of the educated clergy and the self-made itinerants of his younger days, says: "*Facts* will show how much many of these men, in vigorous eloquence and power, surpass those who have passed through college. Every man must make himself; the college cannot do this for him. Some who had very few advantages in early life, may be most emphatically said to be great men." These great men were the traveling preachers of Methodism, at that period of its history in this country, when it is now sometimes said Methodism was represented and proclaimed by bands of unlettered and ignorant itinerants. Ignorant or learned, they shook the country and took possession of it; and if the ancestral churches of this land can derive any consolation from the idea, that they were outdone on the field of battle by a set of raw and weak invaders, they ought to be welcome to it. When Colonel Hayne was accused of having been put to flight by his great antagonist in the Senate of the United States, his boastful reply was, that "it took Daniel Webster to do it." The day may come when the ancestral theology of this country will be glad to look upon American Methodism as having always presented similar claims to its respect!

Digitized by Google

be beyond the limit of its appeal. That appeal, too, is urgent. Everything depends upon it. Not only the real blessings of the present state, but the glorious enjoyments of immortality, are suspended upon the decision of a moment. The minister comes to offer eternal life to every man who will consent to take it. A single refusal may seal the destiny of an undying creature for eternity. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation; and there must be no procrastination. This is Methodism; this is the message which its heralds brought to the population of this country; and it is not to be wondered at, that it creates an ardor, a power, an eloquence unknown to those denominations, which make the salvation of a soul to depend on the decrees of God, whose plan of mercy includes a small but definite number of the race, to which all the preaching in the world cannot add a solitary individual. It is not at all singular, therefore, that Methodism should have surpassed all competition in the high order of its pulpit eloquence. Not only were its early preachers, almost without exception, far beyond the common level of their profession in this respect, but their successors, as a body, have seldom had their rivals. Has any American sect produced, I will not say an occasional orator, but such a catalogue of orators as is found in the record of such names as John Summerfield, John N. Maffitt, Willbur Fisk, George Cookman, Henry B. Bascom, and others of their class, who, in their day, were the acknowledged princes of the pulpit eloquence of this country? It is freshly recollected by many of the living, that there was no audience-room in the land a quarter large enough for either of these distinguished speakers, when it was known over any breadth of territory that they were going to preach. We, of this day, think it noticable if such a man as Henry Ward Beecher can fill a house holding three or four thousand people, when it is settled and well known, over all the land and for a year together, just when and where he is to speak. There is certainly a measure

Digitized by Google

of fame in this fact; and it would be entirely ungenerous not to award the gentleman the full merit of it; but what is that fame, after all, compared with that of Summerfield or of Bascom, who, with half a day's notice of an appointment to preach, in any city of the nation, would call out from three to five or six times as many people as could be crowded into the largest assembly-rooms to be had on such occasions. Summerfield, it is well known, drew the largest and selectest audiences ever seen in the cities visited by him since the days of Whitefield. Citizens of the southern and western States have told me, also, of the whole adult population of large districts of country, more than all the meeting-houses within miles of the spot could hold, going out and filling all the roads on the way to the place, where they were to listen to the eloquence of Bascom. The same boundless power over the masses belonged to John Newland Maffitt. Once, in the city of Boston, the writer of this gave out an appointment for Mr. Maffitt, at the close of the morning service, that he would preach that afternoon and evening in one of the largest audience rooms in the capital of Massachusetts. It had not been known a moment before to the public that he was anywhere within the neighborhood of Boston. The afternoon and evening came; a sea-coast storm of wind and rain had set in, soon after the morning hour; and before the second service of the day began, it rained in torrents, and continued to rain more and more copiously from that time through the night. The tempest was so black with cloud, and fog, and rain, that the gas-lights had to be lit in the afternoon to enable the audience to find their seats. There was not another man in Boston, nor in Massachusetts, excepting only Daniel Webster, who could have called out a hundred gentlemen under circumstances so utterly unpropitious. Mr. Maffitt's audiences, however, both afternoon and evening, made up of about the usual proportions of the sexes, were as brilliant as can be imagined. The place was the old

Digitized by Google

Federal street theatre; it was packed from pit to dome with the *élite* of Boston; not only were all the seats, but the aisles and corners were densely crowded, hundreds of ladies being obliged to stand, below and in all the four galleries, because the whole living mass was so wedged in that no gentleman could move out of his place to make a vacancy; the more venturesome, crowded more and more by those pushing forward from the doors, clung to the front railings of the galleries, where they seemed to hang like bees when swarming; and when the preacher arose to read the first hymn, and the full head of gas was poured on the scene, it was both curious and exhilarating to behold what multitudes of human beings, gathered by so brief a notice, could be so crammed together. The next morning, I was told by the sexton, that, though all the ladies and most of the gentlemen were compelled to come in carriages, nearly as many arrived and rode away, after the house was full, as had been admitted. This, however, was the universal experience of Mr. Maffitt; for it was at this time, only a few days before this visit to Boston, that the street in New York on which stood the church in which he had been advertised to preach, had been so blocked by the masses of carriages and foot passengers striving to make their way to the spot, that it had to be cleared by the help of the municipal authorities.

There is no question, indeed, that Methodism has been foremost of all the American denominations in the production of popular preachers; its early history in this country was so marked by the number of its brilliant pulpit orators as to open a new era of popular eloquence on this continent; and their style and manner, including their extemporaneous method, have so taken possession of the public mind, that all classes of public speakers, excepting only the clergy of some small religious bodies, have been compelled by the pressure of the general taste to follow their example. But it may be thought, if this notice of Wesleyan oratory should here close

Digitized by Google

with an allusion to the dead, that the inheritance of this gift has been lost to the representatives of the Methodism of the present generation. This, nevertheless, is not the truth. American Methodism, it is admitted, has at this moment no Maffitt, no Summerfield, no Bascom; it has no man precisely equal to George Cookman, and Willbur Fisk; but it has a score of preachers who can preach more ably (if not as eloquently) than either of the three great orators I have mentioned. Let me build for the reader a Methodist platform; let me seat upon it the Rev. Drs. Thomas H. Stockton, John M'Clintock, Edward Thomson, George F. Pierce, William A. Smith, Joseph Cross, Edward Schon, Abel Stevens, William H. Milburn, Jesse T. Peck, Randolph S. Foster, and John P. Durbin. What reader, I ask, will build another platform, and place upon it an equal number of American clergymen, selected from no one denomination, but from the leading denominations of the country, with an expectation of gaining credit by such competition? Let the two platforms be located, side by side, in some crystal palace, or Niblo garden; give the two a question of any character, civil, social, or religious, to be bandied in debate between them; or call upon them each to represent itself in full by addressing an audience of fifteen or twenty thousand in successive speeches. I should be willing for myself, whatever might be the test, or whatever twelve American clergymen might be selected for the opposition, to witness the proceedings and abide by the result. If there are in this country twelve preachers, or twelve platform speakers, not members of the Methodist denomination, which could enjoy a comparison or a contest with the twelve I have here presented, I confess myself so uninformed as not to know them.

And yet, there is a distinct body of Methodist clergymen, to no one of whom have I alluded, who, as a whole, would maintain an equally respectable rank on the platform, or in the pulpit. I refer to the Rev. Drs. Thomas A. Morris,

Digitized by Google

Edmund S. Janes, Levi Scott, Osman C. Baker, Mathew Simpson, and Edward R. Ames, who are known as the Methodist bench of bishops. This bench is not selected mainly on the basis of great preaching abilities; but it happens that the existing episcopal body, as a body, is remarkably eminent for its oratorical genius. Bishop Baker's strength is in the composition, rather than in the delivery, of whatever he addresses to the public. Bishop Morris, whether he writes, or speaks without writing, is a model of clear, simple, direct, cogent, and yet unimpassioned eloquence. Bishop Scott is a logical preacher; but his logic is always all on fire with feeling; and his discourses are oftentimes positively overwhelming. Bishop Janes is plain, neat, and beautiful, with a thought in every emotion, and an emotion in every thought—clear as sunlight in the arrangement of his subject—transparent and as pure as the heavens in his diction—easy, fluent, graceful, and yet powerful in delivery —the Summerfield of the present generation. Bishop Simpson is an impassioned speaker; his subject is always grand, or sublime, and vast in its bearings and application; his arrangement is climacteric, the discourse all the while growing deeper, and broader, and loftier, and at the same time warmer and mightier, till it closes with bursts of power like successive peals of heavy ordnance; and he seldom sits down without leaving his audience full of interesting ideas, captivated with the charms of voice and manner, softened to tears by the irresistible and all-embracing sympathies of the preacher, and firmly resolved from that hour to live for God and immortality. Bishop Ames, last but not least of this list of orators, has so many sides to his genius that it is not easy to comprehend him in a sentence. He is naturally a statesman. Had he given himself to civil affairs, he must certainly have reached a very great eminence among the leading spirits of our country. He has all the penetration, forecast and circumspection requisite for the most responsible posi-

Digitized by Google

tions. He excels in financial talent; and he would have known, as the ruler of a state, to develop the resources of his people by the arts of peace, or to make sudden and legitimate accumulations of capital for the emergencies of war. He would have been popular as well as able in civil life; for his address is as easy as his judgment is profound. As an orator, he would have belonged, as he now belongs, to the school of Webster, rather than to that of Patrick Henry. Being of a bilious temperament, and requiring a great deal of motive to call him fully out, he delivers many ordinary discourses to one effort worthy of his power; and his hearers are as often tempted to resent his apparent apathy as to admire the strength in reserve which they cannot fail to see; but when he is called out—when he falls upon an occasion which demands him to the uttermost—he always justifies his title to the *nom de guerre*, given him by his clerical comrades in early life, of being the Lion of the West. A distinguished clergyman of Great Britain, who visited the leading evangelical churches of this country as a soliciting agent for a European charity, after spending a year or two in the United States, remarked in my hearing just prior to his departure, that he had had the pleasure of listening to nearly every one of our most celebrated American preachers, and that the ablest sermon he had heard, as well as the ablest he had ever heard, was delivered by Bishop Ames at an annual conference of his denomination. It is not to be supposed, however, that the preference of a single critic is to decide a question of comparative merit among men of such eminent and varied genius; there are causes enough existing in the peculiarities of every individual, as well as in the surroundings of the moment, to give him an impression which might not be given to another, and which he himself might not be in a condition to receive at any other time; but, with all this allowance, it is not too much to say, that this episcopal bench of Methodism in America can furnish as powerful and splendid speci-

Digitized by Google

mens of pulpit oratory as are to be listened to at this day on either side of the Atlantic; and yet, reader, if you will still follow me with credence—and I have studied moderation in my judgments—the *facile princeps* of the Methodist pulpit in the United States, who, for all the qualities of a masterly sermonizer, stood at the head of the sacred eloquence of American Methodism, was a gentleman to whom I have not yet alluded—the Rev. Dr. Olin—the Demosthenes of his denomination.

Of the College of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Rev. Joshua Soule, D.D., is the senior. He was born at Bristol, Maine, August 1, 1781, and is in the 79th year of his age. He entered the travelling connection in the eighteenth year of his age, and has been effective through an unbroken period of sixty-one years. His commanding talents secured for him a prominent position in the Church, and in 1816 he was elected book agent at New York, and editor of the "Methodist Magazine." He continued in this relation until 1824, when he was elected bishop, and is at this time the oldest of all the bishops in the Church, North or South. No bishop since the days of Asbury has been more tireless in his labors and travels. In 1842, he was appointed delegate to the British Wesleyan connection; and in company with Dr. Sargent, of Baltimore, represented the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Wesleyan Conference in 1842. In the division of the Church in 1844, he identified himself with the southern section, and hence his labors since that time have been in the southern States. Bishop Soule has a reputation as wide as the American Union. As a presiding officer, he has but few equals, and none that can possibly command greater respect.

The second in the Board of Bishops of the Church, South, is James Osgood Andrews, D.D., whose connection with the slavery question constituted the basis of the unhappy division of the Church above alluded to. He was born in Georgia in 1794, and is at present sixty-six years of age. He entered

Digitized by Google

the South Carolina Conference in 1813. His letters, containing accounts of his episcopal tours in Texas and California, are full of interest. Possessed of great energy, independence, and originality of thought, admirable powers of pulpit eloquence and administrative talent, he has earned a wide reputation.

John Early, D.D., was born in Virginia, in 1785. He was for many years secretary of the Virginia Conference, and for a long time represented the same as a delegate in the General Conference. In 1846, he was elected book agent of the publishing house of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which position he occupied until his election to the episcopacy, in 1854. He has preached as presiding elder a greater number of years, and been a delegate in general conference more frequently, perhaps, than any other preacher now living. Bishop Early is a revivalist, and the fruits of his morning prayer meetings in the conference room, and the glorious results of his pulpit labors bear witness to the fact.

Robert Payne, D.D., was born in Tennessee, and entered the Tennessee Conference in 1819. In 1830, he was elected President of La Grange College, Alabama, which position he held with distinguished credit as a scholar, until he was called to the episcopacy in 1846. His abilities as a preacher are of a high order. As a conference officer he is deservedly popular.

George F. Pierce, D.D., was born in Georgia, where he entered the ministry in early life. He graduated at Franklin College, and was for several years President of Emory College, Georgia. In 1846, he was called from this post to the episcopacy, and has proven a most efficient officer of the Church. His visit to Newark, New Jersey, to assist in the dedication of the Broad street Church, in connection with Bishops Janes and Simpson, was of great interest, and his eloquent sermon on that occasion will long be remembered by those who were present.

Digitized by Google

Hubbard H. Kavanaugh, D.D., was born in Kentucky, and entered the travelling connection in that State. His discourses are marked by purity of sentiment, felicity of expression, beauty and force of illustration, and a most refreshing unction. His travels among the Indians on the frontiers, and in California and Oregon, have been of great service to the Church, of which he is an honored bishop.

The rank and power of Methodism in the United States are not to be found, however, in its powerful and brilliant oratory only. Its eloquence alone would have been sufficient, doubtless, to give it a high position in the social world. But its character has been made, and is now to be discovered, equally at least in the productions of its pen. The pen is the mightiest of human instruments; its work is broader and yet deeper than that of the tongue; and its results remain when every other evidence of human genius, and of human labor, has vanished into the thin air, or crumbled back to dust. Nor has American Methodism been insensible of its power. The first effort of Methodism in this country, as in all countries, was of course to gather up a people by its preaching, who might afterward receive and read its books. The books, however, in due time came. Methodism, nevertheless, is not an association formed for the purpose of making and gathering up observations upon the various agencies, moral, religious, or social, by which it is surrounded. It came not to record the doings of other bodies. It came, not to write, but to do something worthy of being written down for the benefit of others; its literary productions, therefore, are confined almost entirely to the legitimate development of its own great mission; and yet that mission, since the time when it could most fitly employ the pen, has set so many hands to paper, that American Methodism has always made a respectable show of writers, and now teems with literary works of a high order in nearly every department of human knowledge. It is a singular fact, strikingly in con-

Digitized by Google

tradiction to the general charge of illiteracy raised against the first heralds of Methodism in the United States, that our early history abounds with books written by these men. To say nothing of our original superintendent, who was a Doctor of Laws and a gentleman of fine scholarship, look at Asbury, and Lee, who, while traveling from one end of the continent to the other, wrote those volumes which still remain upon our shelves. Valentine Cook, according to the sufficient testimony of Bishop Morris, was a splendid scholar, as well as an orator of the first order. Beauchamp was another intellectual giant; he was a profound dialectician and philosopher, though known to the world only as a fearless itinerant and a preacher of great popularity; and his writings, for the most part still in manuscript, because he was too busy to perfect them and too prudent to publish them unrevised, have been declared by Bishop Soule, a kindred character, to be worthy of the genius of a philosopher of the classic ages.

In this country, as in Europe, it has often happened that the most remarkable scholarship has occurred among those humble workers in the field of Methodism, who were known to their contemporaries, not as men of learning at all, but as men of action. Sometimes the erudition of an obscure individual, entirely unrecognized until brought out of his obscurity by an accident, has finally met its reward within the bosom of the denomination, but has not gone out into the surrounding world, or has not found its place in the annals of his times. I will give a single illustration of this general fact. Many years ago, when connected with a literary institution in New England, at a hotel where I chanced to stop for dinner, I heard some of the servants talking largely of their learned Irishman, who, it appeared, was the groom of the establishment. They said much about his knowledge of the languages. Half-thinking it might be one of the shallow marvels of this class of people, and yet having nothing better

Digitized by Google

for the moment than to look after it a little, I proceeded to inquire out the hero of this servile colloquy. He was an Irishman of more than forty years of age. He had a pile of books stowed away in an empty manger; and I discovered some of the rarer of the Greek and Latin classics among them. He read to me from both languages till I was satisfied of his attainments; and I at once procured his release from his low occupation, offering him, at the same time, a situation in the seminary as teacher of ancient languages. He immediately astonished the students with his readiness and learning. They filled the place and the surrounding country with reports of his vast accomplishments. Not long after his arrival, I had full proof of his quality myself. We had entered into an arrangement to read together and compare the Old Testament Scriptures in Greek and Hebrew. He held the Hebrew, I the Greek; and thus we took notes of the various readings. On the day referred to, I paused a moment to consider the peculiar signification of a word. At other times he had waited for me, but now I was soon recalled from my contemplation by the tones of his voice. He was reading; he was reading Greek, though still holding the Hebrew Bible in his hand; and I soon perceived, to my astonishment, that he was translating Hebrew into Greek, in which he succeeded so admirably, that his translation would frequently be, for whole passages together, almost word for word like the version which I held in my hand. On being arrested, he smiled and said he could "turn it the other way as well." So, on our exchanging books, he translated the Septuagint into Hebrew with astonishing correctness. He next translated both the Greek and Hebrew, first into Latin, I following after him with the Vulgate in my hand, then into French, then into Italian, then into Spanish, and lastly into Gaelic, where I could no longer track him. He said he could proceed in the same manner with several other languages, ancient and modern, but, as he had already gone beyond my

Digitized by Google

reach, I was obliged to take his word for it without further verification. He spoke the Latin fluently, as well as most or all of the dialects of modern Europe except the German, which he thought was very well characterized by Charles the Twelfth, who said it was fit only to be talked to cattle. In hearing the recitations of his classes, if a pupil asked the meaning of a word, he would launch out into such a sea of references to the classics where the word was used, that the inquirer was oftentimes more astonished than instructed. In making his classical citations, which would run up from half a dozen to twenty-five or thirty at a time, he would always give the context of the places cited in the original language, and generally would give the book, chapter and page of the editions which he read. He was, in a word, the most thoroughly educated classical scholar, as I think, on this continent; I do not believe, indeed, that either Porson or Bentley were capable of the feats of scholarship performed by him; and yet, he toiled for years as an unknown professor in a denominational institution, known at most only among the people of his religious choice, for whom he was willing to labor without the rewards of fame or the honors of ambition. His name was Andrew Walsh.

Similar cases of great scholarship in the humbler walks of Methodism have come under my personal observation in other places. Some years after the time of the incidents just narrated, there was a young man, not more than twenty-one or two years of age, employed in the Methodist High School for boys in the city of Cincinnati, who, considering his youth, was a character still more remarkable than Mr. Walsh. He was a fine English scholar; he could also read and speak with native ease and fluency the leading European languages; he had made himself wonderfully familiar with the literatures of those languages; and he could sustain any critical opinion he might advance by any quantity of apt quotations from the modern European classics, now reciting Schiller, or Goethe,

Digitized by Google

or Klopstock like a literary German, next pouring out passage after passage from Petrarch or Dante as if he had spent a long life in perusing the Tuscan poets, then inundating his listeners with successive floods from the Castilian fountains, like an enthusiastic Spaniard, and so ranging through the languages and literatures of the refined nations of Europe, from London to Leipsic, from Leipsic to Rome, from Rome to modern Athens, and from one period of the histories of these various literatures to another, as if he had given sixty or seventy years to the study of the authorities relied upon by Hallam and Sismondi. He read the Greek and Latin classics with great readiness and beauty; and he spoke the Latin tongue so much more correctly than the most learned professors of the city, that, though a Methodist and a teacher in a Methodist institution, he was employed to teach the priesthood connected with the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Cincinnati in the art of Latin conversation. He subsequently went to Europe to indulge his appetite for study; and there he still remains, I believe, occupying his time in teaching, and in brushing the dust of centuries from the libraries of the great literary capitals. The young man's name is Baker; and his age is now (1859) somewhat less than forty.

It will not serve the restricted limits of this chapter, however, to deal further in these examples of remarkable scholarship which have all the while existed in the bosom of the Methodist denomination; it is difficult, indeed, to pass over in silence several others equally rare and wonderful; but it will be necessary from this point to reduce the literary men of American Methodism into classes, naming, it may be, a specimen of each class as the representative of his fellows. There is now living, for instance, the Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D., LL.D., President of the Iowa Wesleyan University, whose speciality is patristic literature, and who, in this department, has no equal in this country, though he stands

Digitized by Google

at the head of quite a school of younger men who are walking in his footsteps. His Delineation of Romanism, a work published in the United States and republished in Great Britain, has been pronounced, on both sides of the Atlantic, the most learned and able portraiture of Popery, and the best argument against its absurdities, since the days of the great Protestant struggle carried on by Selden, Usher, Grotius, and their insular and continental fellow-combatants. His time has not been entirely devoted to this field of study. He has written many other volumes of vast learning, among which may be mentioned his Sinfulness of American Slavery, in which he exhibits his minute and deep scholarship in the civil and canon law of classical and ecclesiastical Rome, quoting the Corpus Juris Canonici, as well as the Pandects and Novels of Justinian, as familiarly as he would his catechism. He has owned for years, and has with great diligence perused and studied, the leading authorities cited by Gibbon in his history of the Decline and Fall of Rome; and he is the only man in this country who would be capable, at this moment, of reviewing critically that great performance, and of pointing out the places where its author's skepticism caused him to twist his authorities to the prejudice or dishonor of Christianity. He is so full of this kind of lore, that he can scarcely write a newspaper article, or get warm in conversation, without betraying the depth and breadth of his knowledge in this department. But his information is abundant in every other field of learning. I was once with him in his own garden; and I asked him the name of a tree near which we were standing. He at once gave me its common name, then the Latin name, and from this he proceeded to "talk of trees" not only like a Solomon, but as if he had done nothing in his day but to study all the standards in botany from Linnæus to the last of the modern school-books. He is a man who has mastered the circle of human knowledge, in the same

Digitized by Google

sense as the eulogium is applied to such characters as Milman and Guizot of Europe, but for whom no suitable comparison can be found among the scholars of this country. His forte, however, is his knowledge of the Greek and Latin fathers, and of the great Roman authors, ecclesiastical, civil, and historical, from the era of the rise of Popery to the fall of the Roman empire. But with all his erudition, he is little known beyond the limits of American Methodism, the working of which has hitherto been so centripetal, that it has absorbed the abilities it has produced more than it can do, or ought to do, in future.

At the head of a large class of metaphysical minds, which have risen up within the pale of the Methodism of this country, stands the name of the Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D., late President of the Wesleyan University, at Middletown, Connecticut, whose reading in mental and moral science was nearly universal, and whose abilities were equal to his learning. Dr. Olin was a very large, heavy man, with a head too massive to preserve the proportions of his body. In college, he was noted for his strength of mind and for his incessant application. After completing his university course, he became a general reader, as if he wished to store his mind with all kinds of useful knowledge; but his principal delight was metaphysics. As this part of his life has not been adequately written, I am compelled to write what is essential to this subject from recollection. Many years ago, he came to my residence on a visit to the place where I then resided, and found me looking into Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. "I have read that work, too," he said in his humble and quiet manner; and he commenced at that point and gave me a synopsis (at my request) of his reading in these authors. He told me that he had examined carefully all the leading writers in this branch of study, from Plato to the latest of the German and French writers; he said that he had long

Digitized by Google

contemplated a survey of the history of philosophy to be written on a new plan and comprised within the compass of four or five octavo volumes; but his health had entirely broken down; and he could attempt nothing, he added, save the duties of the University, and an occasional sermon, or a lecture to his students. By mental constitution, by his habits of thinking, and by the better part of his education, he was the fittest man ever raised up by American Methodism for the preparation of standard works, not only in the history of metaphysical speculation, but in the practical departments of intellectual and moral science. He maintained that the great lack of the theology of Methodism was the reduction of its tenets to a scientific system; he was anxious to see that work attempted by some one competent to its execution; and, when urged to undertake the great enterprise himself, he replied with a deep sigh, that *that*, too, had been one of the literary projects of his early years, but that all projects had been swept away by the utter failure of his constitution. Though he never undertook the development of any of his favorite ideas, for which he had spent a lifetime in the most vigorous and extensive preparation, he certainly made himself, as I believe, the best-read as he was by nature the profoundest metaphysician of this country. What he did write, though mainly upon other subjects, is a sufficient proof of this declaration. His published sermons, while they are everywhere marked by their evangelical character, and are warm with apostolic fervor, are always based on some leading idea, some philosophical principle, which the writer develops in a most scientific manner. In all these discourses, also, like a true philosopher, he advances from the known to the unknown, from the theoretical to the practical, from the general to the special, closing with the application of what had been thoroughly argued and established, or recognized as intuitional, in the strictest logical order. Intuition, indeed,

Digitized by Google

was a distinguishing trait of his extemporaneous addresses, and hence of his intellect itself: and his glances were so quick, and the weight of remark in passing from one great topic to another so momentous, that he seemed to

"Leap like the live thunder"

from thought to thought; but he showed, in his written performance, that patience of argumentation which is the complementing power to intuition in the mind of a genuine philosopher. To catch at abstract truths with the rapidity of lightning, and then to elaborate and verify them with the utmost carefulness of science, were the leading intellectual chacteristics of this great man. He wrote nothing without a manifestation of this twofold excellence, his books of travel being a sort of compendious statement of the deductions of a philosophical mind from facts patiently examined, all of which are made afterward to result in general ideas and principles. He was the metaphysician of American Methodism; but he was not alone; for in the same class must be recorded the names of the Rev. Timothy Merritt, the Rev. John P. Durbin, D.D., the Rev. Israel Chamberlayne, D.D., the Rev. John Dempster, D.D., the Rev. H. M. Johnson, D.D., the Rev. Charles K. True, D.D., of the northern States, and those of Ignatius, A. Few, LL.D., and Augustus B. Longstreet, LL.D., of the southren wing of the denomination in this country. Perhaps a score of respectable metaphysical thinkers might be added to this list—of writers ranking for *intellect* with such men as the English Morrell and the Jouffroys and Constandts of France—who, though now too young to have become great producers, are destined to make their mark within a decade or two to come; but the Plato of American Methodism, the man of the double faculty of argument and intuition, was Dr. Olin, whose genius was kindred

Digitized by Google

to that of Sir William Hamilton, and whose only American competitor, in metaphysical ability, was the Edwards of Northhampton.[4]

In the department of the classical languages and their literatures, the Methodism of the United States has a representative in the Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D., LL.D., President of the Troy University, whose Greek and Latin school-books have obtained a commanding position, and are extensively used in the best literary institutions, within and without the pale of Methodism, in a country more abundantly supplied with this class of productions than any in the world. He was largely assisted in the preparation of his series by the Rev. G. R. Crooks, D.D., a gentleman of accurate classical attainments, whose labors in his favorite studies have but begun. With these leading scholars of this class, there must be recorded the name of the Rev. Stephen M. Vail, D.D., Professor in the Methodist Biblical Institute at Concord, N. H., who, though he has produced but little for publication, is doing much for classical learning among his pupils, and who, when he finds the opportunity to write and publish, is destined to prove himself one of the most thorough orientalists of this continent. There is another name to be mentioned in this immediate connection; and it is the name of a gentleman, who has devoted every day of his public life to the active duties of the ministry. I refer to the Rev. Isaiah McMahan, A.M., whose Hebrew without a Master has been well ro-

[4] Among the metaphysical productions may be mentioned Smith's Elements of Mental Science and the Mental Discipline by Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; and, with some reason, Mercein's Natural Goodness and the Lectures of the Rev. H. B. Bascom, D.D. LL.D., might be placed under this division of the literature of American Methodism. Dr. Olin's Life Inexplicable except as a Probation is a splendid specimen of the application of metaphysical reasoning to the facts of revelation. Bledsoe's Theodicy: or a Vindication of the Divine Glory is also a most able argument based on fundamental principles.

Digitized by Google

ceived by the best critics of this country, and who has written a still larger and abler work, now in manuscript, on the same subject. Mr. McMahan, besides the Hebrew, reads Greek and Latin accurately and extensively, and has mastered the better part of the oriental languages cognate to the Hebrew, particularly the Chaldaic, Syriac and Arabic, in which he is especially proficient. The name of Professor N. C. Brooks, A.M., of the Baltimore High School, is prominently connected with the cause of classical education in the Methodist denomination. His Latin and Greek Lessons have each passed through several editions, and, for simplicity and perspicuity of arrangement and style, I know not where or when they have been surpassed by any similar publications. But it is not possible, in a single paragraph, to give even the names of those Methodist classical scholars, who have merited well of their country for their works; and it is still less possible to mention the scores of gentleman, who, in our Seminaries and colleges, by their thorough instruction, have made good proof of their deep, accurate and extensive acquaintance with the classical and oriental languages.

It was a remark made by a learned gentleman, not a Methodist, when the Wesleyan University at Middletown was about to be established, that "the Methodists were a money-getting and energetic poople, and might be able to put up the brick and mortar of a University, but that they had not the scholars to do the inside finish." The result did not justify this uncharitable opinion; and the truth now is, that, should every classical teacher in our numerous literary institutions be annually swept away, there is a reserved list of the same class, and of equal ability, left in the bosom of the denomination large enough to supply the vacancies for twenty successive years, while the number every year pouring out of these schools, amply qualified for classical professorships, is nearly one-fourth as large as this reserve list itself. There is no people in the world, in fact, making the progress in

Digitized by Google

this direction now being effected by the Methodists of the United States.[8]

The physical and mathematical sciences, however, have not been neglected by American Methodism. It has raised up a very respectable number of authors and teachers in this department, who have obtained a high position in the scientific world. Augustus W. Smith, LL.D., late President of the Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut, and now Professor in the National Naval School of Maryland, stands at the head of our mathematicians; and he has shown by his publications that he is second to but very few, if to any, of the leading mathematicians of this country. There is also John Johnston, LL.D., a veteran professor in the University at Middletown, whose works in chemistry have given him a high rank among American authors in this field of learning. In the same class must be recorded the name of George C. Whitlock, LL.D., Professor of Natural History in the Iowa Wesleyan University, whose mathematical genius has been eulogized by Professor Pierce of Cambridge, and which is, without any dispute, of the very highest order. His publications constitute a sort of summary of mathematical study; and they have been pronounced, by such judges as Professors

[8] The series of classical school books prepared by Dr. M'Clintock includes a First and Second Book in Latin and a First and Second Book in Greek, which, thus far, are the most popular of his productions. Professor Brooks has published, in addition to his Greek Lessons, a reading book in Greek (with notes and a vocabulary), which constitutes an easy progressive introduction to the language. Perhaps the reader will suffer me to mention also Tefft's Greek Tables, constructed on a new principle, the object of which is to follow nature, and the use of which, as claimed by the author, will save at least half of the time usually spent in the acquisition of the elements of the language; and I must also mention Dr. Crook's New Latin-English lexicon, based on the Latin-German lexicon of Dr. C. F. Ingerslev, and now recently from the press. Dr. Crooks was assisted in this work by Prof. A. J. Schem, of Dickinson College, who should be mentioned as a classical scholar of no secondary capabilities.

Digitized by Google

Pierce and Lovering, to be remarkable exhibitions of mathematical learning, ability, and ingenuity. A series of very popular astronomical works, from the hands of Professor H. Mattison, A.M., has long been before the public; and a fact to be mentioned in this connection is, that Mr. Mattison, excepting a brief and almost nominal occupancy of a chair in a Methodist seminary, has given his life to the labors of the itinerant ministry. Professor Silas L. Loomis, A.M. and M.D., who holds the first place in a first class literary institute at Washington, D. C., is the author of a short series of Arithmetics on a new and improved plan, which is taking a high position within the better class of seminaries and academies in this country. Many years ago, an Algebra was given to the public by the Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; and still earlier, an edition of Ward's Mosaic History was issued in New York under the supervision of the Rev. J. P. Durbin, D.D.; but I cannot speak of the particular merits of these two publications, as I have never had the opportunity to examine them.*

From the earliest days of Methodism, great attention has been paid to the literature of the Scriptures. Mr. Wesley, it will be remembered, was converted while listening to the reading of some of Luther's comments on one of St. Paul's epistles; the first employment of his little band, called the Holy Club, was the study of the Greek Testament; and from that day forward, the ministry of Methodism has been noted for

* The leading work of Dr. Smith on "Mechanics" has been received with deserved favor in the United States; and the several productions of Dr. Johnston—A Manual of Chemistry on the Basis of Turner's Chemistry—A Manual of Natural Philosophy—and A Primary Natural Philosophy—have gone through many editions and obtained for their author an enviable rank among the scholars of this country. Dr. Johnston has also contributed several important and interesting scientific papers to the columns of Silliman's Journal, to the Methodist Quarterly Review, to the National Magazine, and to other similar publications.

Digitized by Google

its knowledge of the Bible. They have always been able to quote it with remarkable facility; and among them have risen up, from time to time, some of the most wonderful specimens of this ability that have been known to the world. I will give a solitary example. The Rev. Isaac Puffer, for many years a traveling minister in central and western New York, has been known to cite over three hundred texts in a single controversial sermon, always giving the book, chapter and verse correctly, and from memory. He would let any person open the New Testament at random, and read any verse that happened first to arrest attention, when he would begin and rehearse the context, above or below, till the listener was satisfied of his ability to proceed without limitation.

Again, he would ask any bystander to name any text by its book, chapter, and verse, when he would repeat the passage, and then proceed as I have before mentioned. He could recite any book, selected by another or opened to by chance, forward or backward, as his company might desire, in either case announcing the number of each chapter and verse in passing. I have heard him say, that were the New Testament blotted out, he could reproduce it, word for word, with all its divisions and subdivisions as heretofore existing, from simple recollection; and I have witnessed so many demonstrations of his familiarity with the Word of God, that I am compelled to credit his declaration. But Mr. Puffer was not alone, in this respect, in the ministry of his denomination. Several similar cases have fallen under my personal observation; and the Methodist clergy as a whole have been from the first, in their knowledge of the English version of the Scriptures, the most thoroughly disciplined ministry of modern Christianity.

The early preachers of American Methodism did not write a large number of works in this department, as their first labor was to utter their instructions orally to the famishing multitudes around them. What the denomination has pro-

Digitized by Google

duced, however, as might be expected of men so familiar with the text of revelation, are now not only numerous but of a most respectable order of merit. Foremost among this class of Methodist authors, I place the name of the Rev. F. G. Hibbard, D.D., whose Palestine is unrivaled by any similar production, whose Psalms Chronologically arranged with Historical Introductions has acquired an American and European reputation, and whose pen has not been idle, nor is now idle, on other biblical topics of the utmost importance to the public. The works of James Strong, S.T.D., Vice-President of the Troy University, particularly his Harmony and Exposition of the Gospels, evince patient research and profound scholarship, not only in the original languages of Scripture, but in the entire field of the literature of revelation. The Rev. A. M. Osbon, D.D., in his Daniel Verified in History, has given another proof of the abilities of the Methodist ministry in these sacred studies. The Concordance of Alexander Cruden, hitherto the standard concordance in our language, has been fairly superseded by the ample and yet more condensed work of the Rev. George Coles. The Sabbath School organization of American Methodism abounds in small but popular publications in the biblical department, which, though written for the use and instruction of the young, have been very generally prepared by persons thoroughly competent by their natural talent and literary cultivation. The list of Methodist productions in biblical literature is altogether too ample for the limits of this chapter; and I will mention only one more work on which American Methodism would be willing to risk its reputation for ministerial learning. It is the Chronology recently given to the world by the Rev. Peter Akers, D.D., President of the Hamline University, in which its author exhibits proof of his having exhausted the subject in his preparatory examination of it. Whatever may be thought of his conclu sions, no competent reader can peruse his volume without seeing on every page the demonstrations of his abundant

Digitized by Google

learning. He has looked profoundly into every system of chronology, and into all the methods of recording the march of time, ancient and modern, from the half-authentic, half-mythical tables of the Egyptian and Oriental chronologers to the Olympiads and the Urbs Condita of the Greeks and Romans, and from these to every successive school of the Saturnian science to the current moment. Neither Usher, nor Hales, nor Sir Isaac Newton, nor Father Pouciet, nor Ideler himself, has ever surveyed the whole subject of epochal history with greater diligence or more patient research; and yet, the writer of this rare work has given the greater part of a long life to the practical duties of a regular Methodist preacher.[7]

The theology of Methodism, as a matter of course, was written mainly by its founders; and the consequence is, that the Methodism of this country has not been called to the preparation of a large number of strictly theological productions. We republish here the entire works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., of the Rev. Adam Clarke, LL.D., the Commentary of the Rev. Joseph Benson, the Institutes of Theology of the Rev. Richard Watson, as able a performance as there is of its kind in the English language, and all the

[7] Some of the most useful works in this department, from the pens of American Methodists, are the Manual of Biblical Literature, by Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D., the Compendium of the Gospels and the Harmony and Exposition of the Gospels, by James Strong, S.T.D., the Harmony of the Gospels, by the Rev. D. D. Buck, the Scientific Evidences of Christianity, by William C. Larrabee, LL. D., Lectures on the Beatitudes, by the Rev. George C. Crum, A.M., the Biblical Atlas and the Scripture Gazetteer, by the Rev. T. O. Summers, D.D., and the works named above from the pen of Dr. Hibbard. This is but a small part, however, of the larger volumes on this subject; while the popular treatises are literally too numerous for a note; and then there is an immense quantity of this sort of matter scattered over the denomination in the form of tracts or pamphlets, to which must be added a large portion of the twenty-nine volumes of the Methodist Quarterly Review.

Digitized by Google

standards of the Wesleyan press of England. We have added very considerably, nevertheless, to this list of theological authorities. Dr. Ralston has furnished an able restatement of the institutes of theology from the Arminian point of observation. A similar work, on a popular scale, has been achieved by the Rev. Asbury Lowrey, A.M.; and his volume, entitled, Positive Theology, I regard as the best production of its size that has been produced on this subject by the denomination. The Calvinistic controversy has been conducted very ably, in separate treatises and in sermons, by the Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D., Rev. Timothy Merritt, Rev. Willbur Fisk, D.D., late President of the Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut, and by the Rev. R. S. Foster, D.D., President of the Northwestern University, at Evanston, Illinois. Among the many Methodist works on the more practical topics of Christianity, the Christian Perfection of the Rev. George Peck, D.D., the Central Idea of Christianity, by the Rev. J. T. Peck, D.D., and the numerous productions of Mrs. Phebe Palmer, the leading one of which is her Faith and its Effects, would be enough to establish the theological credit of the oldest and most erudite denomination. The entire circle of theology has also been traversed in the various collections of sermons from Methodist authors; and, in this department, so long as the collected discourses of the Rev. Thomas A. Morris, D.D., of the Rev. Henry B. Bascom, D.D., LL.D., and of the Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D., shall remain in print, American Methodism will have no cause to avoid a comparison with any religious body since the days of Luther.*

* It may be added, that, besides a volume of sermons recently put to press, the Rev. Dr. M'Clintock has in preparation (1859) a theological and biblical encyclopedia, and that the Rev. William Nast, D.D., a graduate of a European university, and a scholar of the highest eminence, is at work on a commentary of the Scriptures which is to be published simultaneously, I trust, in English and in German. Though I wish to be cautious

Digitized by Google

History and biography have received particular attention from the writers raised up by American Methodism; but their genius has been spent almost exclusively on the biography and history of the Wesleyan movement: in which fact is again seen that centripetal influence which has so long and so completely marked the operations of Methodism, and which must soon give way to wider sympathies. In biography, American Methodism has a plethora of publications; no denomination, I think, can compete with it in this particular;

in a chapter which must be egotistical in its nature, I think it can be said in sober truth, that for depth and breadth of mental vision, and for a combination of the leading qualities of a good intellect, reason—memory, and imagination—exhibiting themselves in logical strength, in extent of acquisition, and in a delicate and polished taste, Dr. Nast has not many superiors on this side of the Atlantic. The leading published works under this subdivision are the following: Christian Baptism, by Rev F. G. Hibbard, D.D.; Obligations, Subjects, and mode of Baptism, by Rev. H. Slicer; Infant Baptism, by Rev. F. G. Hibbard, D.D.; Calvinistic Controversy, by Willbur Fisk, D.D.; Calvinism as it Is, by R. S. Foster, D.D.; Notes on the Gospels, 2 vols., by Rev. Andrew Carroll; Christian Perfection, by Rev. George Peck, D.D.; Christian Purity, by R. S. Foster, D.D.; The Lord's Supper, by Rev. S. Luckey, D.D.; Guide to the Lord's Supper, by Rev. Daniel Smith; System of New Divinity Examined, by Rev. F. Hodgson, D.D.; Positive Theology, by Rev. A. Lowrey, A.M.; Analysis of Butler's Analogy, by Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D.; Analysis of Butler's Analogy, by Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D.; Daniel verified in History, by Rev. A. M. Osbon, D.D.; Resurrection of the Dead, by Rev. C. Kingsley, D.D.; Delineation of Romanism, by Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D., LL.D.; Rule of Faith, by Rev. George Peck, D.D.; Exposition of Universalism, by Rev. J. H. Power, D.D.; Universalism As it Is, by Rev. N. D. George; Universal Salvation, by Timothy Merritt, and Rev. Willbur Fisk, D.D.; Miscellaneous Sermons, by Rev. T. A. Morris, D.D.; Sermons, by Rev. H. B. Bascom, D.D., LL.D.; Sermons, by Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D.; Sermons, by Rev. N. Bangs, D.D.; by Rev. William Capers, D.D.; by Rev. John Dempster, D.D.; by Rev. Daniel Curry, D.D.; by Rev. Elijah Hedding, D.D.; by Rev. Samuel Luckey, D.D.; by Rev. J. T. Peck, D.D.; by Rev. Peter P. Sandford, D.D.; and by Rev. D. D. Whedon, D.D.; the Methodist Episcopal Pulpit, collected by Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; and several similar collections

Digitized by Google

and some of these productions, like the Life and Times of Bishop Hedding, by the Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D., the Life of Dr. Willbur Fisk, by the Rev. Joseph Holdich, D.D., and the Life and Times of Bishop Asbury, by the Rev. William P. Strickland, D.D., are models of this class of works, though they can scarcely hold a higher place than the capital little volumes entitled, respectively, the Life of James Quinn, by the Rev. John F. Wright, D.D., and the Life of John Collins, by the Hon. John M'Lean. Judge M'Lean's book is a work of the heart, Mr. Collins having been his acknowledged spiritual father, by whom he was introduced, not only into the church of Christ, but into the Methodist denomination; and the result is, that the eminent abilities of the man, and the strongest and tenderest affections of his nature, combine to render his production the Agricola of American Methodism. The Compendium of Methodism, by the Rev. James Porter, D.D., a gentleman who will long be remembered for this volume and for his Chart of Life, is a sort of historical exposition of the church of which he is a learned and able representative. The Temporal Power of the Pope, by the Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D., written in refutation of the Speech of the Hon. Joseph R. Chandler, of the Lower House of Congress, exhibits the author's dialectic strength to good advantage, but is still more suggestive of his profound and extensive reading. The Golden Horn, from the manuscripts left by the Rev. Dr. Olin, and edited by Dr. M'Clintock, is another production of the highest order in this department. It is here, also, that belong a numerous collection of histories of Methodism, written by clergymen of the American branch of it, including the journals of such pioneers as Francis Asbury and Jesse Lee. The first complete history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, however, is from the hand of the venerable and able Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D., now the Nestor, formerly the Ajax, of the ranks in which he mustered. But the great historical masterpiece of the deno-

Digitized by Google

mination on this side of the Atlantic is the History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, called Methodism, by the Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D., who, prior to the inception of this undertaking, had been known as the author of the Memorials of the Introduction of Methodism into the Eastern States, of the Polity of Methodism, of the Ministry for the Times, of Sketches and Incidents from the Saddlebags of an Itinerant, and of several minor performances, besides numerous reviews and other contributions to the Methodist periodicals of the day of the first order of literary merit. This history of Methodism, however, up to this date, is the great achievement of his life; it has received the highest encomiums of the American and European press; and I believe it is not too much to say of it, that it is not only the ablest specimen of ecclesiastical history thus far furnished by the authors of this country, but that it takes rank with the best classical histories, ecclesiastical or civil, of modern times.*

* The works most known in this department of American Methodist literature, are Asbury's and Lee's Journals; Life and Times of Asbury, by W. P. Strickland, D.D.; Biographical Sketches of Eminent Methodist Ministers, by Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D.; History of Camp-meetings, by Rev. James Porter, D.D.; Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, by Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D.; History of the Christian Church, by Rev. Calvin Ruter, D.D.; Autobiography of Rev. J. Travis, by Rev. T. O. Summers, D.D.; History of the Discipline, by Rev. Robert Emory, D.D.; Life of Rev. John Collins, by John M'Lean, LL.D.; Life and Remains of Melville B. Cox, by Rev. G. F. Cox, A.M.; Life of Bishop Emory, by Rev. Robert Emory, D.D.; Gems of Female Biography, by Rev. Daniel Smith; Autobiography of Finley, by Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D.; Life of Freeborn Garretson, by Rev. N. Bangs, D.D.; Sketch of Philip Gatchl by John M'Lean, LL.D.; Life and Times of Bishop Hedding, by Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; Life and Times of Rev. Jesse Lee, by Rev. L. M. Lee, D.D.; Heroines of Methodism, by Rev. George Coles; Ten Years of Preacher Life, one vol., and Pioneers Preachers and People of the Mississippi, in one vol., by Rev. W. H. Milburn; History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D.; Lost Chapters from the early History of the

Digitized by Google

It was a remark of Mr. Wesley, that he had respect toward young men, because they were likely to live, and possibly to be useful, when he should be silent in his grave; and the thought so impressed him, that he made it a question to be presented to all his preachers, whether they would be diligent in the instruction of the young. He was the first to establish the Sabbath School, open to all children, who were instructed by benevolent individuals laboring without pay. He intimates, in one of his letters, that he felt like appealing from the grown-up population of Great Britain, who were settled in their habits of neglecting the Word of God, to the rising generation whose minds were ready for the reception of the truth. He always believed that Methodism was to have a special commission to the young; the disciplines of both branches of his great family, English and American, have inscribed the same idea upon their pages; and now, probably as a consequence of this original impulse, the Me-

M. E. Church, by Rev. J. B. Wakely; Memorials of the Introduction of Methodism into the Eastern States, by Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D.; History of Missions in the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D.; Mormonism and the Mormons, by Rev. D. P. Kidder, D.D.; Life and Letters of Stephen Olin, by Mrs. Olin; Original Church of Christ, by Rev. N. Bangs, D.D.; Autobiography of a Pioneer, by Rev. Jacob Young; Pioneers of the West, by Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D.; Poet Preacher, by Rev. Charles Adams, A.M.; Life of James Quinn, by John F. Wright, D.D.; Life of Bishop Roberts, by Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D., LL.D.; History of American Bible Society, by Rev W. P. Strickland, D.D.; Recollections of George W. Walker, by Rev. M. P. Gaddis; Wesleyan Preachers, by R. A. West, Esq.; Life of Willbur Fisk, by Rev. Joseph Holdich, D.D.; Life of John Wiclif, by Rev. Daniel Curry, D.D.; The Great Secession, by Rev. C. Elliott, D.D., L.L.D.; Annals of Southern Methodism, by Rev. C. F. Deems, D.D.; Sketches of Western Methodism, by Rev. James B. Finley, D.D.; Brazil and the Brazilians, by Rev. Daniel P. Kidder, D.D.; Words that shook the World, by Rev. C. Adams, A.M.; History of Methodism, by Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D.; and to this abbreviated list I may be permitted to add, as works a little out of the common course of topics of Methodist writers, Hungary and Kossuth, and Webster and his Master-pieces, by the author of this volume.

Digitized by Google

thodism of the United States sends out a larger list of Sabbath-school publications than any religious body in the world. In this field alone, it has a literature worthy of any people of any age, enough of itself, without a page of all the volumes hitherto referred to, to give a literary as well as religious character to the denomination by whom it has been produced. A catalogue of this literature, without note or comment, would make a book; and I can only add, therefore, that American Methodism is indebted chiefly for this result to the Rev. Daniel P. Kidder, D.D., and to the Rev. Dr. Wise. Dr. Kidder is known to the world outside of Methodism, for his Sketches of Residence and Travels in Brazil, a work as much read in Europe as in the United States; but the glory of his life consists, and probably will consist, in his having laid the foundations of the greatest establishment for the emission of Sabbath-school publications of the age in which he lives. He was not alone in his efforts; he employed the best talents of his church, male and female, in the preparation of his volumes, which are too numerous to be individually recognized in this chapter; and it is possible only to remark, that, of the works outside of the Sabbath-school list, but written expressly for the young, the leading authors are the Rev. William Hosmer, the Rev. George Peck, D.D., the Rev. Jesse T. Peck, D.D., the Rev. E. O. Haven, D.D., and the Rev. Daniel Wise, D.D. Mr. Hosmer's Self Education is a learned and judicious appeal to the natural aspirations of young men; and the Manly Character of Dr. G. Peck is a yet higher effort of the same general scope. The True Woman, by Dr. J. T. Peck, is a good conception, wisely and carefully executed, a truthful and philosophical solution of the deep problem of domestic happiness; Dr. Haven's Young Man Advised has taken a respectable position in this class of works; but the representative head of this department of our literature, the Coryphæus of it, the Peter Parley of American Methodism,

Digitized by Google

without any contradiction or competition, is the Rev. Dr. Wise, whose juvenile publications have run from edition to edition, till it is no longer of any use to attempt to number the thousands of them which have gone out to bless and educate the up-rising world.[10]

There is one department of literature, which, contrary to what might have been the natural expectations of the public, has received more than its share of attention from the writers of American Methodism. I refer to the belles-lettres department, in which, from the beginning of history, there have been in every language at least a hundred failures to one success. It includes both prose and poetry; and it would not be unnatural to suppose that Methodism, a system so stern in its hold upon the moral faculties, would clench the mind with too firm a grasp to admit of that free play of the intellectual powers, essential to every work of art. It must be remembered, however, that John G. Whittier is a Quaker, that John Milton was a Puritan, and that there is nothing in the strictest moral regimen unfriendly to the liveliest and

[10] The Sabbath-school publications of American Methodism are so numerous that I will give only the numbers of them in their several classes. The Children's Library consists of 465 vols.; the Youth's Library of 664 vols.; and the Sunday-School Library, as per catalogue for 1859, of 1127 vols.; and the issues of the Tract Department, which engrosses the labors of the Rev. James Floy, D.D., as special editor—in the English, French, German, Danish, and Swedish languages—consisting of every size of work from a couple of fly-sheets to a bound volume, make up an additional library of more than a thousand distinct publications. And yet the Sunday-School and Tract Departments of American Methodism are of very recent date. The first Sabbath-School periodical ever started in this country by the denomination was the S. S. Messenger, founded, owned, and edited in 1837, by Rev. D. S. King, who, for this reason, must be acknowledged as the father of this division of our work. Mr. King was also the founder, publisher, and editor of the Guide to Holiness, which preceded the periodical styled the Beauty of Holiness, now edited by Rev. Mr. French, and which anticipated the valuable and abundant labors of Mrs. Palmer by many years. *Detur digniori!*

Digitized by Google

sublimest freedom of the imagination. Methodism, as has been seen, is the child of a family of poets; and there never has been a period in its history, when it would not have been easy to show the world how consistent it is with the artistic spirit in every order and style of composition. Strange as it may appear to some, American Methodism, instead of feeling any inferiority in this department of its literature, is rather inclined to invite the notice of the public to it. It would lay before the critical reader a list of the authors it relies on for a favorable judgment upon the question of its capacity for elegant composition. The works of the Rev. Henry B. Bascom, D.D., LL.D., have already been acknowledged as classical by the most fastidious critics of this country; the Knickerbocker Magazine has for years been lavish of its praises on the elegance and richness of his style; he has been ranked by this authority among the first of the recent and living writers of the language; but American Methodism by no means looks upon Dr. Bascom as the fittest representative of its labors in this field. His remarkable pulpit oratory made him a more widely known representative; but a better style than Dr. Bascom's will be found in the productions of the Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D., another Methodist of the southern States, who, though very eloquent in speech, is scarcely known beyond the limits of his denomination. Northern Methodism, on the other hand, can point to such gentlemen as the Rev. D. D. Whedon, D.D., the Rev. William H. Allen, LL.D., the Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D., the Rev. Erastus Wentworth, D.D., and the Hon. William C. Larrabee, LL.D., each of whom has as good a claim to represent the prose-writers of American Methodism as that of Dr. Bascom. Dr. Whedon is not only a prose-writer but a poet of decided elegance. Dr. Allen has few superiors in the tastefulness of his composition; and in the use of the beautiful imagery of the Greek and Latin mythology, which, with the finest classical references and quotations, he weaves into the texture

Digitized by Google

of everything he writes, he has no superior on the western shores of the Atlantic. Dr. Stevens is best known, so far as this side of his character is concerned, as a writer of sketches —sketches mainly of men of great eminence—in which he shows the hand of a master. It is not his diction, nor the structure of his sentences, in which he particularly excels; but any one of his sketches, taken as a whole, is a well-drawn and splendidly executed picture. He is a pen-painter, and calls to mind the gentleman standing next in order, Dr. Wentworth, who, in his younger days, would draw a better off-hand portrait with his pencil, on the blank leaf of a book, than half of the professional limners of his generation, but who has subsequently become one of our most ornate and graphic writers. Dr. Larrabee, recently deceased, stood at the head of our sentimental writers; his diction is "English undefiled;" though a thorough classical scholar, and a reader of the leading languages of modern Europe, he never tricks off his sentences with French phrases and learned allusions; beginning with a clear and full conception of his topic—which is generally characterized by a tinge of melancholy—he proceeds directly forward in a strain of great earnestness, which admits of no excess of ornamentation, his heart throbbing more and more as he advances, and the heart of his reader melting with the progress of the subject, till the theme is closed and the words of beauty cease to flow. Dr. Larrabee, so far as mere style is concerned, is the most attractive prose-writer of American Methodism; but there is still another name, not yet mentioned in this connection, the Rev. Edward Thomson, D.D., LL.D., president of the Wesleyan University of Ohio, who, for all the qualities of a belles-lettres style, must be regarded, I think, as the standard-bearer in this department of the literature of American Methodism. He has more thought than Dr. Larrabee, as much spirit as Dr. Stevens; and his periods, though not as nicely balanced as those of Addison, nor as well rounded off

Digitized by Google

as the periods of Dr. Johnson, remind the reader of both of these English classics. Dr. Thomson is a poet as well as a prose-writer; but he is outstripped in metrical composition by many of his own denomination. William C. Brown, Esq., of Boston, is a poet of fine abilities, though not gifted with the "madness" of his order. Like Halleck, he has written only a few pieces; but these have been quoted and read so much, and have become so thoroughly incorporated into our common speech, that the public have arrived at a sort of forgetfulness of their author. In the same connection must be mentioned the names of Mary Maxwell, known only as "Mary" in our American periodicals, and of Helen C. Gardner, whose poems are in every way equal to those of Miss Alice Cary, a well-known poetess of this country. Whoever will look over the pages of the Ladies' Repository, for the last fifteen years, will find a list of poetical contributors to that magazine, not less than ten or twelve in number, out of the scores that have contributed poems to its columns, any one of whom would figure to advantage in the current poetical literature of the United States, and some of whom would do it honor. The Rev. John D. Bell, still a young man of about twenty-five, has sent into the world several poems, of the many written by him, which set him high among the sons of song, while his numerous prose articles are equally replete with every element of true poetry except the measure and the rhyme. He has now in manuscript a belles-lettres work, entitled Man; or the Higher pleasures of the Intellect, which will add immeasurably to his literary reputation. The most gifted of all the poets of American Methodism, nevertheless, is the Rev. Mark Trafton, A.M., author of a book of European letters, and lately a member of Congress from the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Trafton has written but little; his few pieces, however, have the ring of the real metal in every stanza; his genius is so abundant and various, that he is equally capable of almost every species of poetical

Digitized by Google

composition, the humorous being rather the most congenial to his natural disposition; and it is much to be regretted, that he has not seen fit to wander more frequently and fondly around the shade-covered fountains of Parnassus. His imitations of Punch are quite on a par with Punch himself; his satire is caustic to the very last degree; he could write puns as triumphantly as Saxe, had he a little less of the loftier sense of the true dignity of man; and he might long since have made himself one of the first of the serious and sentimental poets of this country, equal to any one below the rank of Bryant and possibly not below this rank, had he given himself to this ambition, and could he have sufficiently held down that ebullient spirit that now makes him the leading Methodist representative in the fraternity of Thomas Hood.[11]

[11] The principal productions in this department are Letters from Europe by Rev. M. Trafton, A.M., and his fugitive poems; Speeches by Rev. George Cookman (both of these works being artistically executed and not written in the common style of such publications); Miscellany, by Rev. Thomas A. Morris, D.D., Sketches from the Study of an Itinerant, by Rev. A. Stevens, LL.D.; Tales and Takings, by Rev. J. V. Watson, D.D.; Scraps and Poems, by Mrs. Searles; Collegiate and Popular Addresses, by Rev. D.D. Whedon, D.D.; Sketches, Literary and Religious, by Rev. Erwin House, A.M.; Sketches and Incidents from the Saddlebags of an Itinerant, by Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D.; The Methodist by (nom de plume) Miriam Fletcher; The Rifle, Ax and Saddlebags, and Pioneers, Preachers and People of the Mississippi, by Rev. W. H. Milburn, A.M.; National Magazine, 12 vols., edited by Rev. Abel Stevens, LL.D. and Rev. James Floy, D.D.; the Ladies' Repository, 14 vols., edited successively by Rev. L. L. Hamline, D.D., Rev. Edward Thomson, D.D., LL.D., Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D., Hon. William C. Larrabee, LL.D., and Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; the Educational, Biographical, Moral and Religious Essays, as well as the Letters from Europe, by Rev. Edward Thomson, D.D., LL.D.; Rosabower, by Hon. W. C. Larrabee, LL.D.; A year in Europe, by Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D.; Lectures, by Rev. H. B. Bascom, D.D., LL.D.; Headlands of Faith, by Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D.; The City of Sin, an allegory, by Rev. Mr. Remington; and the Christian Virtues as a Divine Family, by Rev. D. D. Buck.

Digitized by Google

It may be imagined by the reader, who has not made himself acquainted with the real condition of modern Methodism, and who has derived his opinion of it from its early history in this country, or from the misrepresentations of its enemies, that I must have taken great labor to gather up and parade all the distinguished names of American and European Methodism for the purpose of this denominational exhibition. This is not so. The labor has been, on the other hand, to discover how to exclude individuals from these lists and do equal justice to the successive departments of our literature and to those having claims to be mentioned in connection with them. No reference, therefore, has been made to a large and most able class of miscellaneous writers, some of whom have written books, while others have made their reputations by magazine articles of great value, whose combined publications would constitute of themselves alone a very abundant literature for some of the smaller denominations. There is the Rev. James Floy, D.D., late editor of the National Magazine, and the Rev. Daniel Curry, D.D., recently president of the Indiana Asbury University, and the Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D., an industrious contributor to the pages of the Methodist Quarterly Review, and the Rev. Calvin Kingsley, D.D., editor of the Western Christian Advocate, and the Rev. Charles Collins, D.D., president of Dickenson College, and the Rev. William Hunter, D.D., professor in Allegany College, whose pens have not been idle, and whose essays have contributed largely to create and foster the literary spirit of American Methodism. Among the miscellaneous writers, also, should be recorded the names of the Rev. James V. Watson, D.D., the Rev. Maxwell P. Gaddis, A.M., the Rev. Joseph M'D. Mathews, D.D., Gabriel P. Dissossway, A.M., Mrs. C. M. Edwards, the Rev. L. D. Davis, the Rev. S. R. Coggeshall, D.D., who has been styled "the walking library of Methodism," the Rev. R. W. Allen, A.M., the Rev. J. S. Inskip, the Rev. John Miley, D.D., the Rev.

Digitized by Google

Robert Allyn, A.M., whose style is sometimes Addisonian, the Rev. Bp. Osman C. Baker, D.D., the Rev. Bp. E. S. Janes, D.D., the Rev. Bp. M. Simpson, D.D., and the Rev. T. F. R. Mercein, A.M, whose united publications would make a library of no ordinary value.[12]

But I will burden the memory of the reader with no more names. I have given enough to justify the statement of the New York Evangelist, an organ of the Presbyterian denomi-

[12] Fair representative specimens of the general literature of Methodism in the United States will be found in the following works: Observations in the East, by Rev. John P. Durbin, D.D.; Travels in the East, by Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D.; California Life Illustrated, by Rev. William Taylor; Arthur in America, by Rev. W. P. Strickland, D.D.; the Methodist Discipline, by Rev. O. C. Baker, D.D.; Chart of Life, by Rev. James Porter, D.D.; Christian Love, by Rev. Daniel Wise; Christian Principle and Mental Culture, by Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D. LL.D.; Christianity Tested by Eminent Men, by Prof. M. Caldwell, A.M.; Church Polity, by Rev. A. Stevens, LL.D.; Christian's Manual, by Rev. Timothy Merritt; Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D.; Class Meetings, by Rev. John Miley, D.D.; Compendium of Methodism, by Rev. James Porter, D.D.; Essay on Dancing, by Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D.; Death-bed Scenes, by Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; Defense of our Fathers, by Rev. John Emory, D.D.; Incentives to Doing Good, by Rev. R. W. Allen, A.M.; Domestic Piety and Family Government, by Rev. John H. Power, D.D.; Life and Works of Bishop Emory, by Rev. Robert Emory, D D.; Episcopacy and Slavery, by Rev. George Peck, D.D.; Episcopal Controversy Reviewed, by Rev. John Emory, D.D.; Fire-Side Reading, 5 vols., by Rev. D. W. Clark, D.D.; The Sacred Hour, and The Footprints of an Itinerant, by Rev. M. P. Gaddis; Letters to School Girls, by Rev. J. M'D. Mathews, D.D.; Life in the Itineracy, by Rev. L. D. Davis; Life Among the Indians, by Rev. J. B. Finley, D.D.; Ecclesiastical Polity of Methodism, by Rev. F. Hodgson, D.D.; Economy of Methodism Illustrated, by Rev. Thomas E. Bond, M.D., D.D.; Reasons for Becoming a Methodist, by Rev. Daniel Smith; Why are you a Methodist, by Rev. George Peck, D.D.; Minister of Christ for the Times, by Rev. C. Adams, A.M.; New Testament Church Members, by Rev. C. Adams, A.M.; The Works of Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D., 2 vols.; Pallissy, the Huguenot Potter; Parent's Friend, by Rev. Daniel Smith; Temporal Power of the

Digitized by Google

nation in the United States, that "no religious body in this country can present so various and extensive a collection of denominational *literature* as the Methodist Church." This, without any doubt, is the simple truth; and I have now mentioned the writers who have taken leading parts in the achievement of this result. Since the general fact is conceded, not only by the New York Evangelist, but by many similar authorities, I have not deemed it out of place to remark, in passing, upon the comparative merits and characteristics of the authors, whose works have been adduced in proof. It would not have been impossible to accompany each name with an estimate of his standing as a writer, coming from beyond the limits of the Methodist body; but this would have been a useless labor. The majority of these authors are known at least for their titles of literary distinction; and these, in spite of the low opinion of their value entertained by many, indicate clearly enough the general conviction in regard to their relative position in the world of letters. There are many names recorded in the foregoing pages, however, without such affixes as commonly arrest the attention

Pope, by Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D.; Preaching Required by the Times, by Rev. A. Stevens, LL.D.; Finley's Memorials of Prison Life, by Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D., LL.D.; Religious Training of Children, by Rev. Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D.: The Right Way, by Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D.; Street-Preaching, by Rev. W. Taylor; Sinfulness of American Slavery, by Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D., LL.D.; Faith and its Effects, Useful Disciple, and the Neglected Specialty of the Last Days, by Mrs. Phebe Palmer; Adventures and Observations on the West Coast of Africa, by Rev. Charles W. Thomas, A.M.; Wisdom in Miniature, by Rev. D. Smith; The Higher Law, by Rev. William Hosmer; Ministerial Education, by Rev. S. M. Vail, D.D.; and the Original Church of Christ, by Rev. Nathan Bangs, D.D. And here I wish particularly to add, that nearly all the books mentioned in all the foot notes, as well as in the text, are those included in the publishers' lists of the Methodist Book Rooms at New York (200 Mulberry St.), while it would be absolutely impossible, in a volume of this character, to set down the works written by American Methodist authors and published by the various houses of the United States.

Digitized by Google

of a reader, and which are not likely, therefore, to indicate a claim to any place at all among learned and literary characters, who, nevertheless, could by no means be excluded from the fellowship of Methodist authors. I will give one example of the whole. It shall be the Rev. T. F. R. Mercein, a regular Methodist preacher, a man of the saddlebags and circuit, who happened to attract the notice of a gentleman, whose praise reminds one of the *laudatus laudatis* of the classics. In his Pitts Street chapel lecture, the Rev. Dr. Dewey, an eminent Unitarian clergyman of Boston, in referring to the rank and power of American Methodism, employs the following language: "Very imposing statistics can be presented, for instance, of the progress of Methodism. I am glad there can be. I rejoice at the work which Methodism has done. I like its practical and affectionate spirit. I have attended a Methodist church myself, for two years, in my country home, and there had the happiness to know its pastor, and to call my friend, one of the most thoughtful, reverent and true men that I have ever known in any church." This is said in the body of the discourse; but, as if this eulogy had not satisfied his heart, he adds the following in a foot note: "The Rev. Thomas Randolph Mercein. I hope I may be pardoned this affectionate allusion to the memory of Mercein, in a series of discourses designed to bring out the points of union and sympathy between different classes of Christians. I never knew a young man more fitted, by natural endowments and spiritual gifts, for the holy office he took upon him. He began to preach very young—at nineteen, and died at thirty-one. His remains rest in the cemetery at Sheffield, and ought to have a monument. Beautiful in person, simple in manners, strong in purpose, and indefatigable in labor, in him were combined manliness, earnestness and delicacy, with great strength and beauty of intellect. His work on Natural Goodness shows what he was. I do not agree with his conclusion; but to the originality, insight, eloquence, and geno-

Digitized by Google

rosity of his writing, no one can refuse his testimony." This, though abundantly merited, is probably about as much as would have been accorded, by the most friendly critic, to such a man as Francis Bacon, or John Locke, or Joseph Butler at the age of thirty. Indeed, the production referred to in such terms by Dr. Dewey reminds the reader everywhere of the logical ability of Butler's Analogy of Religion, to which it is scarcely inferior for that searching and exhaustive analysis which characterizes the immortal work of the great English bishop. No, Dr. Dewey does not say too much of this youthful Methodist itinerant, untitled, unhonored, and unknown as he was; but Mr. Mercein was not alone in the ranks of even the younger men of American Methodism. There are others, scattered widely over the continent, toiling upon their obscure country circuits, who are buried in the conscious oblivion of their humble but glorious work. Mr. Mercein, however, is distinguished among his peers by the fortune of having accidentally arrested the notice of a man, whose candor was equal to his knowledge, while the many live, labor and die unnoted, because their brethren disrelish the egotism of asserting a position for them, and because it is the grace of few to know or notice merit beyond the narrow circle in which they chance to move.

And now in taking leave of this general topic, it ought to be particularly observed, that nearly all the examples of the literary men of American Methodism have been taken from the northern division of that church. This course has been pursued, not for the want of any willingness to give due credit to the acknowledged literary character of the Methodism of the Southern States, and of the various smaller bodies in this country and in the British provinces, but because either division was found to furnish more representatives than could be mentioned in these pages, and because of a fear of not doing even-handed justice to the gifts and works of those with whom I have had less personal acquaint-

Digitized by Google

ance. But the defect is easily supplied. As the southern branch of American Methodism is nearly as numerous as the northern, has existed longer, and has ranged more freely among all grades of society, especially the higher, it will not be difficult for the reader to make a due addition to the foregoing statement for that section of the country; he can make another suitable addition for the Methodist Protestant Church of the United States, of which the Rev. Thomas H. Stockton, D.D., is an indefatigable representative; and when his estimate has been thus completed with a proper consideration of the comparative youthfulness of Methodism in America, and with a just respect to all the circumstances of its origin and progress—the preoccupation of the territory, the prejudices of the population, and the feebleness of its beginning—he will certainly admit, that the present condition of the literature of this denomination is one of the marvels of modern history!

If the reader will now remember that the doctrines of Methodism are nothing but the doctrines of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, which are the basis of every modern evangelical denomination within the compass of the English language; if he will remember, also, that the men who introduced these doctrines, with the Wesleyan interpretation, into the United States, were not only men of education, but of remarkable foresight, energy, and perseverance; he will need no help to enable him to perceive that the success of American Methodism could scarcely have been otherwise than abundant; and when that success itself is fairly considered—the several millions of American citizens that have been converted at its altars—its two millions of living members—the eight or ten millions of our citizens now professing their attachment to its doctrines, discipline, and worship—the ratio of its progress in former years, greater than that of any other religious body, *increasing* as the denomination grows in numbers—the wonderful efforts

Digitized by Google

made, and made successfully, toward the general elevation of this vast portion of our populace by the means of a thorough and practical education—and the indubitable fact, that the *zeal* of the whole body, instead of declining with the lapse of time, positively warms under the excitement of its progress, while its appetite for victory becomes keener by every conquest—there can no longer remain a doubt as to the amount of social power which such a cause, and such a people, must exert within the limits of a country set apart and established for the very purpose of giving to the virtuous and enlightened individual, whatever be his poverty or wealth, his plebeian or noble blood, his equal influence on the questions of the hour and place, as well as upon the more distant fortunes of the world.

It is the special glory of American Methodism, let it be remembered, that it has taken hold of the masses of the popu lation, reaching down to the very lowest grades of it, and raised them up, by religious and educational instrumentalities, to a rank of respectability and power. It has seldom, particularly in the older portions of the country, drawn the leading citizens into its embrace; and it was long a sufficient answer to its advances to say of it, that it included only the poorer and the insignificant inhabitants of the land. This, in fact, was for many years the standing and only successful argument against it; and, while Methodism found no difficulty in meeting any of the real logic of its opponents, this sneer was positively unanswerable, because time was required to chasten, and develop, and elevate the multitudes left without religious instruction by the older denominations. But the sneer has now been fairly answered. If Methodism has received but few of the first men of the nation, it has the greater honor of having made them in every section of the Union. Taking the nation as a whole, it would be found, I firmly believe, that a larger number of its influential citizens, professional and practical, are now members of the

Digitized by Google

Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, than of any other religious body on the continent. In several of the southern and western States, including almost the whole of the great Mississippi Valley, there are more of these educated classes in connection with it, either as members or attendants, than can be counted by all of the remaining denominations included within the same limits. American Methodism has sent more members to our State governments, more representatives to Congress, more chaplains to Congress, than any other religious people. One of the Presidents of the United States was the convert and class-member in the church with the first principal of one of the Methodist academies of New England. Another died in the fellowship of the church, and received the last sacrament at the hands of a Methodist preacher, in one of the southern States. Still another, after his election to the first position in the gift of a once grateful Republic, bowed at a Methodist altar in a city of the West, where he obtained, among the humblest of the seekers of religion, that preparation for death which, alas! he so soon required for his stay and hope in the hour of trial There is something so peculiarly interesting in the conversion of the venerable personage here referred to, when he was President elect of the United States, that I will give a single scene of the revival where it happened. It was at Wesley Chapel, Cincinnati, during the winter of 1840–41; and, in addition to the labors of the regular minister of the station, the Rev. M. P. Gaddis, the Society was enjoying the services of the celebrated John Newland Maffitt, not only the most eloquent preacher, but one of the sweetest singers of his time. Everything was in motion. It was a season of great interest and power. Mr. Gaddis, in his captivating Footprints of an Itinerant, in a running description of this revival, says: "In the midst of the mourners at Wesley Chapel, I had the pleasure of meeting every night for more than a week, the lamented President of the United States,

Digitized by Google

the late General William H. Harrison. I was struck with the deep interest he manifested in our altar exercises. He generally stayed till a late hour, standing up during the singing, and in a lowly, kneeling posture in time of prayer for the penitents. On one occasion, he spoke to me in the following deeply-affecting, and interesting manner: 'Brother Gaddis, I know there are some of my political opponents that will be ready to impugn my motives in attending this revival meeting at this particular time, but I care not for the frowns or smiles of my fellow-men. God knows my heart and understands my motives;' and then, laying his hand upon his heart, he exclaimed with much emotion, and with a fervor that I shall never forget, '*A deep and abiding sense of my inward spiritual necessities brings me to this place night after night.*' At the close of one of our meetings, while the Rev. J. N. Maffitt was singing his favorite song, concluding with the chorus,

"'To die on the field of battle
With glory in my soul;'

General Harrison walked to the foot of the pulpit steps and reached out his hand, which was immediately grasped by brother Maffitt, while he continued to sing:

"'Old soldier travel on;
I'll meet you in bright glory,
To die on the field of battle
With glory in my soul.'

"The effect was electrical. The audience simultaneously rose to their feet, while every eye was moistened with tears."

There was told me once a story of the meeting at this revival of General Harrison with the Hon. John M'Clean, one of the associate justices of the Supreme Court of the

Digitized by Google

United States, then and now a member of the society at Wesley Chapel, which, could I rely upon it as entirely authentic, I would relate as an illustration of the leveling power of the Gospel, when its influence becomes irresistible and overwhelming; but, omitting this, I will state that I have myself seen the judge weeping and wiping his eyes amidst the joyous acclamations of a Methodist love-feast, as if he were accustomed to such scenes; and it is well known, that even at Washington, when surrounded by the bustle and folly of the capital, with the weight of his judicial duties on him, he has long been in the habit of meeting, with undeviating punctuality, the humblest of his brethren at the little weekly class. Such instances of the union of eminence and piety, however, have not been uncommon in the history of American Methodism. It has sent, within the last ten years, more than a hundred of its members to the Congress of the United States, and about a score of its ministers, who, after attending to their obligations in the Senate chamber, or in the hall of the lower house, were accustomed to preach to their fellow-men on the Sabbath, sometimes in the city, but more frequently in the less noted appointments of the adjacent country. There is a senator there now, who is performing every year this double duty. The same thing was done too, by the Rev. Joshua Hall, when presiding over the Senate, and officiating as the governor of Maine. In the winter of 1844, I made my first visit to the western States, and I was pleased, while resting over the Sabbath at Indianapolis, to find that one of the classes in the Sabbath-school at Roberts' Chapel, named after our departed bishop, had for their teacher the governor of Indiana. His successor, who is also a Methodist, now represents the United States at the court of Prussia; and I rejoice to learn, that he there holds his weekly class-meetings, to which he invites all his American visitors, and such of the representatives of other foreign countries as seem to be at all religiously inclined,

Digitized by Google

acting thus as the joint minister of his country and his God!

But it is not upon this class of persons that Methodism has relied for its past successes; and Mr. Wesley distinctly warns his followers not to be high-minded, not to be expensive and ambitious in their plans, lest the cause should be thus consigned over to the wealthy and the great. Methodism had its mission to the many; these it exerts itself to raise to the rank and condition of the few; and its great social influence now consists in the possession of a vast portion of the population of the United States, who are a sober, moral, religious, industrious, and hence well-informed and successful people, grateful for the benefits received by themselves from a heart-felt religion, and therefore alive to the good work of perpetuating it among their children, as well as of extending it as far as possible over society and the world around them. And the force of numbers in such a government as that of the United States, and especially of numbers so thoroughly possessed of all the elements of strength, must be great. Two millions of people of this description, distributed into every nook and corner of the country, sustained by a good moral character, educated after the fashion of their neighbors, abundantly supplied with all the means of popular and practical information, owning their full share of the material wealth of the nation, supported by the open profession of eight millions of their fellow-citizens, and represented, if not led, by men who have enjoyed every known advantage of learning and of observation, can be nothing less than a controlling power in the present condition and future history of this country.

Much of the coming influence of American Methodism must spring from the peculiar manner of its distribution. It is weakest in the New England States; it is stronger in the middle States; it is stronger yet in the southern; and strongest of all in the western, toward which the star of our

Digitized by Google

empire has been ever tending, and where it is destined, for ages to come, to stand in the ascendant. Nothing could have been more fortunate for the position and influence of Methodism. We of New England, having learned at school the influence exerted by our gallant little republics in the assertion of our independence and the establishment of our liberties, are dreaming yet over these consolatory lessons of our childhood; but we may as well drop the fond and flattering illusion; for the great middle States, with New York and Pennsylvania in the lead, could get along very well without us; and the ten southern States, as much a unit as New England by their situation and social interests, and rich in their means of material prosperity, are together stronger than the States of the interior; while the grand and glorious West, large enough for an empire without counting a foot of our national soil lying east of its separating range of mountains, will soon have more than half of the wealth, population and power of what we proudly but justly denominate the Great Republic. New England, therefore, is the smallest and weakest of these four general divisions of our country; and it is here alone that American Methodism is comparatively feeble; but it may not continue in this condition long; for while Congregationalism, the strongest of all the New England denominations, is confessedly losing ground, New England Methodism is making the most wonderful advances; and it is even now, in one of the six States, superior in numbers to Congregationalism by several thousand. In the four middle States, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, Methodism had in 1850, according to the United States census, 2556 churches, while the four remaining evangelical and leading denominations—the Baptist, Congregationalist, Episcopalian and Presbyterian—had an aggregate of only 3600, showing that Methodism holds about three-quarters of the popular power of evangelical Christianity in that central division of the country, where the leading State

Digitized by Google

and the metropolitan city of the continent are found. In the ten southern States and the District of Columbia, the above-named denominations have 4458 churches, the Methodists 5015, which gives Methodism an excess of several hundred churches over this combined evangelical competition; and in the eleven western States, the comparison stands—the four denominations, 4899 churches, Methodism, 4863, which, with the statistics of the territories compiled since the census of 1850, will give to the youngest leading religious body in the land a relative ascendency still greater than in the States of the South. The sum of it all is, that, in New England, Methodism is rapidly gaining on the ancestral religion, evidently stretching forward to an ultimate superiority; that, in the middle States, it nearly balances the four great evangelical denominations; that, in the States south, it more than balances them; that, in the great West, which is soon to wield a weightier influence than all the other States combined, it has taken a still stronger position; and that, in all the States together, could there be a vote of the population taken and declared according to the rule of plurality—the rule of the original articles of confederation—Methodism might this day be made, by popular suffrage, the *National Religion* of the country. And yet, reader, American Methodism is so young, that the writer of this page had the pleasure, only a few months ago, of entertaining for a week one of its earliest representatives, yet hale and strong, who was an active member of the convention that gave to it being and form by preparing and adopting its original Constitution!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

OUTSIDE SOLUTIONS OF THE CHARACTER AND SUCCESS OF METHODISM.

It cannot be denied, then, that Methodism has become a power among the social influences of the modern world. Her two or three millions of members, and her eight or ten millions of additional adherents and supporters, decently educated according to the popular system of their day, and some of them among the most learned and intellectual of their generation, with their mammoth printing establishments and presses pouring out rivers of their literary and religious publications, with their almost numberless academies, seminaries, colleges and universities, in which they abound more than any existing denomination, and with their friends and representatives in all the high places of this country as well as of other countries, must take a rank and power of no secondary character. It has been seen, too, how Methodism stands prepared to take the position of the Church of England, and more than make good its long-lost influence on the British population, so soon as the abolition of the tything system, an event sure to come quite speedily, shall have broken off the connection in Great Britain of Church and State, and made room for the development and propagation of a form of Christianity, which all England now admits to be evangelical and devout, and to have been inaugurated and confirmed by the good providence of God. It has been seen, on the other hand, how Methodism has already taken possession of at least one third of the population of the United States; how it is distributed so as to give it the greatest possible influence on the destinies of

Digitized by Google

this country; and how, by the very fact of this remarkable distribution, it cannot fail to advance to a still higher point of power, as the settlement of our new territory progresses, and as the nation itself becomes more and more established.

But we must now take a loftier stand-point, indulgent and intelligent reader, and make our observations for a moment on a grander scale. We must see what must be the influence of such a system of religion, full of its youthful energy and ardor, impatient of obstacles and ambitious of success, guided by a vast experience and backed by the force of overwhelming numbers, besides being as regular and methodical in its movements as an army under the most perfect discipline, not only on the histories of individual countries, but on the fortunes of the world. Its ten or twelve millions, I know, with every advantage that may be claimed for them on the score of zeal and education, may be regarded as an inferior force among the larger religious bodies of mankind. They may be looked upon as nothing very formidable, as nothing for the lodgment of much hope, by the side of the hundreds of millions yet adhering to the Greek and Roman churches. Numbers, however, as has been before remarked, are not always strength; and, as I have applied this axiom to Methodism, it is equally important to see how it leaves Catholicism a secondary power among the social and national influences of the modern world. Catholicism, as a whole, is ignorant; it is enslaved; it is consequently imbecile. Methodism, as a part of the great Protestant reform, is enlightened, free, and therefore strong. Catholicism is non-progressive, stationary, obsolete. Methodism is hungering and thirsting for improvement, for self-development; it is ever on foot for some point beyond itself; it is fresh with all the living ideas of the living age. Catholicism is a system opposed to the interests, rights and sympathies of the masses of mankind; it lives by the oppression of the population; it maintains its power by holding a rod of terror over the freedom of the race and the

Digitized by Google

free use of the faculties of the human mind. Methodism is of the people and to the people; its animus is that which beats at the hearts and thrills through the veins of the greatest number of the human family; it glories in breaking up artificial distinctions and bringing all men to one common but superior level; its watch-words are free will, free grace, and every sort of freedom, intellectual and moral, theological and scholastic, individual and social, temporal and eternal. As the people advance, Catholicism declines, but Methodism goes forward with equal pace, rejoicing in the progress of its mission. In the marshalling of the mighty affairs of time, Catholicism has chosen the part that loses, and is more and more to lose, till it goes out and is known no longer; while Methodism has had given it of heaven the part that wins; and its future is to be linked, as with hooks of steel, to the onward and perpetually advancing movement of the great human brotherhood. Every step taken by the millions in their forward march toward the goal, which both hope and history hold out to us, leaves Catholicism just so far behind; but Methodism, as the religion of the masses, is a portion of this universal progress; and, when its dues shall be recognized and given it, it is to be acknowledged, I believe, as the wheel within the wheels, to which humanity has been indebted, now a century and more, for much of its motion and momentum.

We must look once more, however, from the high position taken for the moment, that this sketch of the rank and power of Methodism may be completed. We have beheld what peculiar bearing a proper distribution of it has, and will continue to have, in the United States. Let us now look again at its position in Great Britain. It began, as has been shown, in England, where it now has intrenched itself, and where it stands ready to take the falling scepter of the national establishment. Its next best field is Ireland, where it is not only the most needed, but where, as it is more and more received,

Digitized by Google

it will have the greater boldness, freedom, and consequently power on the fortunes of the empire. Its weakest point is Scotland, whose Presbyterianism is rapidly breaking up into fragments, and going the way on which rank Calvinism is everywhere descending to that inferiority, to that oblivion, which cannot fail to be its termination. Presbyterianism in Scotland, Catholicism in Ireland, and the Establishment in England, are all gradually giving way, while Methodism, over the three old realms, is gradually and even rapidly advancing. It cannot be long, indeed, before it will be the leading religious power among the population at large of this triune kingdom; and now, while this movement is evidently going forward—while Methodism is all the time reaching upward and taking hold of power—power is at the same moment stooping down to the reach of the people, whose predilections are growingly Methodistic. Every reform in the British Parliament, every movement of a political nature among the parties, has been a reform, a movement, which has given greater social influence to English Methodism; this tendency is not to stop, but go forward, until Methodism in England becomes the acknowledged head of its religious denominations, the religion of its people; and when this time shall come, it will then be ready to be proclaimed, as it is now felt by every philosophic mind, that Methodism has taken possession of those two great Protestant nations, which control, and will for ages continue to control, the character, conduct, and destinies of the nations and populations of the world.

To justify declarations so distinct and bold, and so far beyond the concessions of even the more intelligent of the people of our day, let it be remembered, that, if England and the United States are the countries destined to give laws and regulations to the world, their influence, their power for good, comes not so much from their material resources as from their national character and the peculiarity of their situ-

Digitized by Google

ation. England, for example, controls the Mediterranean, and to a great extent all the nations of Africa, of Asia, and of Europe lying upon its borders, not by owning and holding possession of its shores, but by having in her hands a single stronghold at the entrance of that inland sea, from which her guns can command the respect of every sea-craft passing into or out of it, compelling every one of them to pay homage to her power. In the same way, England and the United States are, by their position, to say nothing of their wealth and number, the two great Gibraltars of the globe. Nothing can go from this side of the Atlantic to any part of the eastern hemisphere without passing near the coast of Britain, or making its way along within bullet distance of her thousand forts. Nothing, on the other hand, can come from the eastern side of the planet, and do business among the nations and peoples of this continent, without falling into similar contact with our naval forces. England and the United States are also the most enlightened countries, all things considered, of modern times; from them are derived all the leading influences, political, educational, and social, which now govern the conduct of mankind; and so long as knowledge is power, so long as the most developed are also the strongest nations, just so long will England and the United States be and remain the controlling governments of this world. These two countries, moreover, are free countries; they are independent, or able to be so, of all other countries; they have personal freedom for every one of their citizens; and, taken together, they are the two heaven-commissioned evangels of popular rights, of popular principles, of constitutional government, which they are to preach to their fellow-nations, by precept and by example, by trade and by treaty, till their very triumphs in this holy labor shall add immeasurably to their capabilities of shaping the destinies of other lands. They have another source of power. It is their native tongue. The language which the two countries speak

Digitized by Google

carries in it more of the civilization of the race, and consequently more of intellectual, moral and even material force, than any other known to man; its Ithuriel touch is felt on the mind of the Mongol as on the heart of the Hibernian; it is the language of the two leading empires of modern times, whose strength at home is proverbial, and whose possessions, the fairest and broadest that the sun has ever warmed or enlightened, nearly belt the world; it is the language of the world's commerce, which every man must speak, or have rendered to him, if he would sell the products of a continent, or buy a pin; it is the language of useful and popular information, of every-day facts and principles, of that species of literature which surrounds the globe like an atmosphere, and which all men having the slightest pretensions to intellecual life must breathe; it is the missionary language, the language of unadulterated Christianity, which, of all the religions of mankind, possesses the elements of universality, and the power to propagate itself among all grades and conditions of the race; and it is the language of human progress, of progress in all directions—in mental, moral, and social concerns alike—which, like a universal talisman, is to change the face of things, and bring on a new era, and a succession of them, till the millennial morn shall break. These two nations, indeed, now give law to man; they now divide the world between them, each having its hemisphere to manage; there is now not a country within the hemispheres, either eastern or western, that would dare to resist them; and the time will soon arrive, when they will be able to stand united against an armed combination of all the nations of the world. Behold, then, thoughtful reader, what divine Providence has brought to pass within a little more than a single century of time. One hundred and twenty years ago, the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., a clergyman of the Church of England, and a fellow of her leading university, inspired with the new idea of making the religion of his country practical instead of

Digitized by Google

theoretical, vital instead of formal, was turned out of doors and disgraced in the eyes of the nation by being sent to the highways and hedges for his congregations; he dispatched his messengers to the United States, where, in their persons, he received similar treatment; but he went directly forward with his undertaking, halting at no obstacles, discouraged by no disadvantages, repulsed by nothing rising up against him, his noble heart beating with forgiveness to his enemies, because he knew them to be ignorant of his great intentions, and his soul fired the more by every successive trial of his courage, because of his assurance that God was with him; and the result now is, that the old church which turned her back upon him is crumbling to pieces—that the opposing sects of his missionary field have ever since been falling behind the growth of population and power of this new republic—that his religion, on the other hand, reproachfully styled Methodism by its enemies, has virtually taken religious possession of the two countries, which, in peace and in war, in arts and in arms, intellectually, morally, socially, as well as in material things, have the control of the human family. Methodism, in a word, now stands without a rival; it is the "Christianity in earnest" of modern history; and its rank and power among men may be stated in the concise but expressive formula, if religion is really the mainspring of human society, as is universally conceded, that it rules and will rule the two nations which govern, and which are to govern more and more, the mind and movements of the other nations of the globe!

And it is here, reader, that I ask you to pause and think; it is here that I wish you to compare the present and the past; it is here that I desire you to witness the difference between the Methodism of your own generation and the Methodism of three generations since; it is here that you are to look upon the greatest problem of modern history, the mystery of Methodism, a mystery often beheld and wondered at, but

Digitized by Google

never solved; and it is here, at this point of our progress in this labor, that you are at liberty to commence with me an exposition of this mystery, a resolution of this problem. And before we begin this work, if you imagine that my statement of the past success and present condition of Methodism has been too eulogistic—though I have labored to speak with historic soberness—if you suppose, even without particular examination of my authorities and of the facts in the case, that Methodism is not as strong as I have represented it, then it is my earnest entreaty that you would set your hand to it and make every deduction which your knowledge, your conscience, or your imagination may suggest. Then, with all possible diminution of the state of Methodism throughout the world, I wish to ask you if it is not still a problem, if its relative position in society is not yet a mystery, when its existing numbers, wealth, education, literature and power are compared with what it was in its origin and with the means which it has been able to employ. The truth is, as it seems to me, that, with every conceivable allowance for the acknowledged prejudices of the writer, and with every reduction that can be thought consistent with a reasonable probability, there is enough left of Methodism to make it the wonder of modern history; and it cannot be looked upon by a person of a philosophic temper without the suggestion of profound inquiries respecting the causes of its growth. That it has grown beyond all example is very certain; that this rapid development and increase must have fundamental causes is not less sure; but it will require no little mental labor, it may be, on the part of writer and reader, to search out those causes, and state them precisely as they are; and yet, whatever the work may cost, there must be thousands of intelligent people in the world, scattered over America and Europe, who, whether connected or not connected with the system of Methodism itself, would experience a profound satisfaction could they be certain of having reached a solution of this

Digitized by Google

problem. Those holding no personal relations to this great movement must be interested to know, by this example, how such enterprises in general may be successfully carried on; and all who do hold these relations, who are members of the Methodistic family, can but desire to see in the past of Methodism its future probabilities, and the safest instrumentalities of its larger growth; while there can be but very few of the thoughtful of either class, but few reading and reasoning individuals in society at large, who would not consider a settlement of this question as one great point gained, not only to historic truth, but to the useful knowledge and common intelligence of mankind.

It is a custom of philosophers, however, before giving their own opinions upon any important subject, to gather up the expressed judgments of other persons, that they may thus set the topic for examination where the light of history is concentrated and condensed upon it. It is natural for us to desire to know what other men have thought of a matter which we propose to investigate for ourselves; and, as nearly every question has two sides to it, or is made to have two characters, favorable and unfavorable, according to the positions of those making the examination, it would be unphilosophical to view the one before us from only a single stand-point. Methodism has had its enemies as well as friends; it has appeared to many as a very great disaster to religion, and to others as among the greatest of earthly blessings; and I shall, therefore, devote the present chapter to the two extremes of outside opinion in relation to its merits, giving place to no authorities having the slightest connection with the Wesleyan system.

I. Wesley and Wesleyanism had their enemies, and met with the fiercest opposition, from the very first, some of the most virulent of their opponents being of the Wesleyan household itself. Samuel Wesley, the eldest of the family, and, as has been seen, a gentleman of great natural endow-

Digitized by Google

ments, for several years wrote the severest strictures upon the doctrines and proceedings of his brother; he pronounced him fanatical and foolish; and he went so far as to accuse him of insanity. Nearly all the sisters united for a time in similar views of the "disloyal and schismatic" position of John and Charles; but it has been shown how they all lived to see the day of reconciliation with their brothers, when they gave them special honor for their works, and covered them with their benedictions.

Among the early acquaintances of the Wesleys, was Mrs. Hutton, at whose house John and Charles Wesley boarded after their return from Georgia; it was while stopping with her that they experienced that sudden and radical change which they both looked upon as their conversion; it was here too, that they commenced their great work of calling the world to the enjoyment of a heartfelt religion; and it was the account which this woman gave to their brother Samuel, which so prejudiced his mind against them, and which laid the foundation of all the clamor that at once rose up about the "fanaticism" and "wildfire" of early Methodism. She tells Samuel how Charles Wesley was "converted" in a moment, while his brother John was praying for him, though he himself was not then converted; she gives him an account of John's conversion as he was waking out of sleep one morning; she relates how the brother had confused and misled her son, a young man, she says, of good disposition but of weak judgment; she describes the wild scenes and extravagant speeches seen and heard by her at the house of Mr. Bray, a follower of the Wesleys, where they had themselves experienced this strange delusion; and she then goes on to ask the interference of Samuel to save her son from the popery and folly of this "rank fanaticism." "These things," this gossiping woman says, referring to the conversions above mentioned, "they make no secrets; for good Mr. Baldwin told me he heard your brother Charles

Digitized by Google

give a relation of a young man at Oxford, who had lived, as he himself thought, a very good and pious life; but he was first convinced it was nothing before he could get this faith; upon which he threw himself upon his face, upon his chamber floor, and lay so (I suppose praying) an hour or two, and then rose up with great joy and peace of mind. This affected Mr. Baldwin so much, that the next opportunity he had to talk with my son he put into his hands a sermon of Bishop Bull upon the subject of the assistance we may expect from the Holy Spirit. But all authors and writers but the Bible are rejected; and every man, if he will practice what he knows, shall have all the light necessary for himself taught him from God. They are, I think, aiming at something more; for my son told me that a woman, who is a dissenter, had three years and more, as she fancied, been under the seal of reprobation; and upon her coming to Mr. Bray's, where your brother Charles, Mr. Bray, and my son were praying for her, though she went home in the same melancholy, yet, in an hour after, she sent them word that she was delivered from the power of Satan, and desired them to return public thanks for the same in her behalf. I heard a poor, simple barber, whose name was Wolfe, relate such a dream that a blacksmith had, as a sign of his just getting into Christ, and of his own power, as put me beyond patience. My poor son lay ill of a fever at the same time, with such a number of these fancied saints about him, that I expected nothing but his weak brain would be quite turned. I think it is not far from it, that he will not give any, the most pious or judicious author his father recommends, a reading. Now your brother John is gone, who is my son's pope, it may please God, if you give yourself the trouble to try, he may hear some reason from you. If you could bring your brother Charles back, it would be a great step toward the reconversion of my poor son. Your two brothers are men of great parts and learning; my son is good-humored and very unde-

Digitized by Google

signing; sincerely honest, but of weak judgment; so fitted for any delusion. It would be the greatest charity you ever did, and your charity of all kinds is very extensive. If you can undeceive your brother Charles and my son, it would put a stop to this wildfire."

Such was the gossip sent to Samuel Wesley by Mrs. Hutton; and Samuel, a man of high church principles and proud of the ancestral glory of the Establishment, listened to her revelations; but his answer, while it plainly condemns the proceedings and doctrines of his brothers, gave a lesson to his informant from which a wiser person would have drawn deep and profitable instruction: "What Jack means by not being a Christian till last month, I understand not. Had he never been in covenant with God? Then as Mr. Hutton observes, baptism was nothing. Had he totally apostatized from it? I dare say not; and yet he must be either unbaptized, or an apostate, to make his words true. Perhaps it might come into his crown, that he was in a state of mortal sin, unrepented of; and had long lived in such a course. This I do not believe; however, he must answer for himself. But where is the sense of requiring everybody to confess that of themselves in order to commence Christians? Must they confess it, whether it be so or no? Besides, a sinful course is not an abolition of the covenant, for that very reason, because it is a breach of it. If it were not, it would not be broken. Renouncing everything but faith may be every evil, as the world, the flesh, and the devil: this is a very orthodox sense, but no great discovery. It may mean rejecting all merit of our own good works. What Protestant does not do so? Even Bellarmin, on his death-bed, is said to have renounced all merits but those of Christ. If this renouncing regards good works in any other sense, as being unnecessary, or the like, it is wretchedly wicked; and to call our Saviour's words the letter that killeth, is no less than blasphemy against the Son of Man. It is mere

Digitized by Google

Quakerism, making the outward Christ an enemy to the Christ within." He then goes on to put a variety of cross-questions to his witness, which would have puzzled a much deeper person, but closes up in a style that must have been sufficiently satisfactory to the Mrs. Huttons of that generation: "*I heartily pray God to stop the progress of this* LUNACY."

He is equally severe upon his brother's doctrine of conversion and assurance, in a letter addressed to John, but given also to the public. "You need fear no controversy with me, unless you think it worth while to remove these three doubts:

"1. Whether you will own or disown, in terms, the necessity of *a sensible information* from God of pardon? If you disown it, the matter is over as to you; if you own it; then,

"2. Whether you will not think me distracted to oppose you with [*i.e.* having] the most infallible of all proofs, inward feeling in yourself, and positive evidence in your friends, while I myself produce neither?

"3. Whether you will release me from the horns of your dilemma, that I must either talk without knowledge like a fool, or against it like a knave? I conceive neither part strikes. For a man may reasonably argue against what he never felt, and may honestly deny what he has felt to be necessary to others. You build nothing on tales, but I do. I see what is manifestly built upon them; if you disclaim it, and warn poor shallow pates of their folly and danger, so much the better. They are counted signs or tokens, means or conveyances, proofs or evidences, of the sensible information, etc., calculated to turn fools into madmen, and put them, without a jest, into the condition of Oliver's pastor. When I hear visions, etc., reproved, discouraged and ceased among the new brotherhood, I shall then say no more of them; but till then I will use my utmost strength that God shall give me to expose these bad branches of a bad root—and thus:

Digitized by Google

Such doctrine as encourages and abets spiritual fire-balls, apparitions of the Father, etc. etc., is delusive and dangerous. But the *sensible necessary information* [doctrine] etc. is such—*ergo*—[*i.e.* Wesley's doctrine of the possibility and necessity of a knowledge of sins forgiven by the witnessing of the Holy Spirit is delusive and dangerous.] I mention not this to enter into any dispute with you, for you seem to disapprove though not expressly disclaim; but to convince you I am not out of my way, though *encountering of windmills*. I will do my best to make folks *wiser*."

Samuel was imitated for a time in this opposition to his brother's doctrine of conversion and the witness of the Spirit by nearly all the members of the Wesley family; not only the sons and daughters, but the sons-in-law, two of whom were clergymen of the Church of England, were violent against him; one of them, Rev. Mr. Hall, turned him out of his house, when he made him a visit at his residence in Salisbury, and wrote the foulest calumnies against his doctrines; and the other, Rev. Mr. Whitelamb, who had been educated at the expense of the Wesleys, especially of John, turned his back on his benefactors, and spent his particular malice on the teaching of the brothers in relation to the witness of conversion: "To be frank," he says in a letter to John Wesley, "I cannot but look upon your doctrines as of ill consequence —*consequence*, I say, for, take them nakedly in themselves, nothing seems more innocent, nay, good and holy. Suppose we grant that in you and the rest of the leaders, who are men of sense and discernment, what is called the *seal and testimony of the Spirit* is something real; yet, I have great reason to think, that, in the generality of your followers, it is merely *the effect of a heated imagination*."

This temporary rejection of Wesleyanism by the Wesley family went out to the world and was exaggerated by interested parties; the enemies of Mr. Wesley made great use of it in their controversial attacks upon him; he was set

Digitized by Google

forth as a reprobate in his own father's household; every conceivable slander was built upon this foundation, not only upon his religious views, but upon his private character; and, as soon as he was dead, and after he had had the satisfaction of seeing every one of his father's family converted to his opinions, the early correspondence between him and them, in which their objections are so forcibly and plainly stated, was gathered up into a volume and published by Dr. Priestley, who says nothing, however, to inform the reader of the fraud thus practiced on him. The design of Dr. Priestley seems to have been to injure Methodism by stereotyping all the gossip of the day, as well as such authentic testimony as the letters of the Wesley family, in relation to the fanaticism of Mr. Wesley and his followers. Every tale that was told, every letter he could find, every scrap in circulation, about the visions and ecstasies of the Methodist converts—their sudden conviction and conversion—their strong expressions of a knowledge of sins forgiven—their professed assurances given them in seasons of fervent supplication—appear to have been examined by him, and it was from his work mainly that the learned men of his generation, and of succeeding times, have taken their bias against the doctrines, discipline and worship of Wesleyan Methodism. As a Unitarian, his opinion of Wesleyanism was of no special consequence to the British and American public; but as a scholar of high reputation, as a member of the Royal Society of England and a friend of Dr. Franklin, his book could not fail to have, as it has had, a wide circulation, and it is easy to this day to trace the spirit, and often the very language, of that work in nearly every outside review, or estimate, or critique of Methodism till the period of the first publication of Dr. Southey's Life of Wesley. Mrs. Hutton gave her account of the conversion and early spiritual labors of her two boarders to their eldest brother; that brother, high-churchman to the loftiest pitch, but sincere and able, communicated the impressions thus received to the

Digitized by Google

remaining members of his father's family; the correspondence that could not fail to be in this way elicited between these gifted but stubborn brothers and sisters was given by Dr. Priestley to the public; and the end of all was a general misleading of the public mind, not in regard to what actually took place and was really said at some of the Wesleyan meetings—for there is no doubt that much extravagance was enacted in them—but of the views and sentiments of Mr. Wesley, and of his leading associates and successors in relation to them. He and they always had their misgivings in respect to outward manifestations of every kind whatever; they often spoke directly and pungently against dreams, visions, trances and apparitions; but because they did not doubt the sincerity of the professions, and deny the good life of those, who, though troubled with these fancies, gave the best of evidence of a change of heart, they were condemned together with their less enlightened followers as fanatics; and hence *fanaticism* was the charge at once fastened upon Methodism in every country, and has traveled along with it, to the beginning, at least, of the present generation. The boarding-house keeper of Little Britain scarcely dreamed, when she wrote her hearsay gossip to Samuel Wesley, that it was one day to affect the mind of a great philosopher, and through him fix the reputation for a long time of the largest religious denomination of modern history.

But Dr. Priestley's view of Methodism, wide as has been its sway, exerted its influence upon the world chiefly through men of science. The religious circles of Great Britain and of other countries received their cue from altogether another quarter. They owe it to the writings of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, a Calvinistic clergyman of the Church of England, who, like Saul of Tarsus, thought himself doing God's service in proportion as he opposed and persecuted Wesleyan Methodism. Mr. Toplady was a man of fine abilities; he was a profound scholar, a thoroughly-read

Digitized by Google

theologian, and a master of strong, nervous, manly English; he was a brilliant poet, some of his hymns having no competitors but the best of Watts and Wesley; and he was a gentleman of deep and fervent piety, his diary being full of proofs of his devotedness to the cause of his Lord and Master. The rank virulence and vulgarity of his style, when writing against Mr. Wesley and his doctrines, have made a very different impression of his religious character upon the Methodists as a body, and upon the majority of even his Calvinistic friends; but it gives me satisfaction to say, that, in spite of all his offendings in his controversial works, he must be regarded as one of the most sincerely and deeply pious ministers ever raised up in the Church of England. His latest English biographer, quoting from his diary, gives numerous examples of the fervor of his religious spirit: "At night," says Toplady, in a record he makes of one of his laborious days, "before I betook myself to rest, I was enabled to *act faith* very strongly on the promises. It was as if I had held a conversation with God. He *assured* me of his faithfulness, and I *trusted* him. It was whispered to my soul, 'Thou shalt find me faithful:' my soul answered, 'Lord I believe it; I take thee at thy word.' This, *I am certain*, was more than fancy. It was too sweet, too clear, too powerful to be the daughter of imagination. There was a *nescio quid divini*, attended with joy unspeakable, as much superior to all the sensations excited by earthly comforts, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Besides, in my experiences of this kind, *when under the immediate light of God's presence within*, my soul is, in great measure, passive, and lies open to the beams of the sun of righteousness. The acts of faith, love, and spiritual aspiration are subsequent to, and occasioned by, *this unutterable reception of divine influence.* I bless my God, I KNOW *his inward voice*—the still small whisper of his good Spirit—and can *distinguish it from every other suggestion whatever.* Lord, evermore

Digitized by Google

give me this bread to eat, which the world knoweth not of!"

Toplady, in fact, was a believer in conversion, in instantaneous conversion, and in that "sensible information," in that "whisper of the Spirit," so distinguishable from every other suggestion, which constituted the soul of Mr. Wesley's movement. He opposed Mr. Wesley only on the ground of speculative doctrine, in respect to which Methodism had not then, and never has had since, any great concern. It is true, the Wesleyans regarded Calvinism as a great stone of stumbling and rock of offence in the way of the world's conversion; and, for this reason, they replied to nearly every argument advanced by Toplady in its behalf; but their antagonist did not stop with argument. After having done what he could to demolish Arminianism, as he found it in the hands of the Wesleys, he went forward to attack their religious character; he accused them, not of fanaticism—for he agreed with them as to the substance of practical religion—but of everything else derogatory to the reputation of a Christian. He wrote incessantly against them. The longest, ablest, and most temperate production of his pen, his Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England, in two volumes octavo, may be taken as a specimen of his style, when writing against Mr. Wesley, prior to the time when his wrath had been stirred to the bottom by Wesley's abridgment of his translation of Zanchius on Predestination; and the judgment he therein passes upon the doctrines and designs of Methodism is more likely to have been his real judgment, his veritable opinion, than could be found in the treatises which were written after he had been stung to the heart by the cool but unsparing logic of Sellon, Fletcher and their fellow-defenders of the Wesleyan system. It must be remembered, too, that Toplady was the champion, and hence the representative, of the Calvinistic opinion of Wesleyanism during his generation; and that opinion,

Digitized by Google

started by the Hutton slanders, and aggravated by the intermixtures of doctrinal jealousy and sectarian resentment, was spread by the Calvinistic divines over the greater part of Europe.

According to this Calvinistic opinion, Methodism was everything heterodox in doctrine, corrupt in design, and disastrous to the good of the world in moral tendency. The author and abettors of Methodism, with all their sacrifices and sufferings, were nothing better than the author and abettors of rank imposition, or of a mixture of fanaticism, deviltry and madness. In the advertisement to the beforementioned treatise, Mr. Toplady gives judgment of their moral character very clearly: "I foresee," he says, "one objection in particular, to which the ensuing work is liable, viz.: that the two Pelagian Methodists, namely, Mr. John Wesley and Mr. Walter Sellon, whose fraudulent perversions of truth, facts, and common sense gave the first occasion to the present undertaking, 'are not persons of sufficient consequence to merit so large and explicit a refutation.' I acknowledge the propriety and the force of this remark. It cannot be denied that the Church of England has seldom, if ever (at least since the civil wars) been arraigned, tried and condemned by a pair of such insignificant adversaries. Yet, though the men themselves are of no importance, the Church and her doctrines are of much: which consideration has weight enough with me, not only to warrant the design and extent of the following vindication, but also to justify any future attempts of the same kind, which the continued perverseness of the said discomfitted Methodists may render needful. I mean, in case the united labors of that junto should be able to squeeze forth anything which may carry a face of argument, for otherwise, I have some thoughts of consigning them to the peaceable enjoyment of that contempt and neglect due to their malice and incapacity. Lord Bolingbroke somewhere observes, that 'to have the last

Digitized by Google

word is the privilege of bad writers'—a privilege which I shall never envy them. Mr. Wesley and his adherents are, in general, so excessively scurrilous and abusive, that contending with them resembles fighting with chimney-sweepers, or bathing in a mud-pool!"[1]

Mr. Toplady's estimate of Methodism, and of the character of its supporters, is to be found also in the following quotation: "In the summer of 1771, a Mr. Walter Sellon (who stands in the same relation to Mr. John Wesley as Celestius did to Pelagius, and Bertius to Arminius, viz.: of retainer-general and white-washer in ordinary) hands a production into the world, designed to prove, that Arminianism and the Church of England are as closely connected as the said Messieurs Walter and John are with each other. The piece itself is the joint offspring of the two associated heroes. As, therefore, in its fabrication, those gentlemen were united, even so in its confutation they shall not be parted. Arminianism is their mutual Dulcinea del Toboso. And, contrary to what is usually observed among co-enamoratos, their attention to the same favorite object creates no jealousy, no uneasiness or rivalship between themselves. Highmounted on Pine's Rosinante, forth sallies Mr. John from Wine-street, Bristol, brandishing his reed, and vowing vengeance against all who will not fall down and worship the Dutch image [Arminius] which he has set up. With almost an equal plenitude of zeal and prowess, forth trots Mr. Walter from Ave-maria Lane, low-mounted on Cabe's halting dapple. The knight and the squire having met at the rendezvous appointed, the former prances forward, and, with as much haste as the limping steed will permit, doth trusty Walter amble after his master."[2]

[1] Toplady's Works, vol. i., pp. 166–167.

[2] Toplady's Works, vol. i., pp. 170–171. The author tells us in a footnote to page 171 what he means by Wesley's setting up the Dutch image: "Pelagianism," he says, "was revived in Holland under the new name of

Digitized by Google

This is certainly quite a plain rebuke; but the author justifies his severity of style from the example of the Saviour: "It is not necessary to be timid in order to be meek. There is a false meekness as well as a false charity. Genuine charity, according to the Apostle's description of it, rejoiceth in the truth. The conduct of our Lord himself, and of the first disciples, on various occasions, demonstrated, that it is no part of Christian candor to hew millstones with a feather. Rebuke them sharply (*αποτόμως*, cuttingly) says the Apostle, concerning the depravers of doctrinal Christianity: wish well to their persons, but give no quarter to their errors. The world have long seen, that unmixed politeness, condescending generosity, and the most conciliating benevolence can no more soften Mr. Wesley's rugged rudeness, than the melody of David's harp could lay the north wind, or still the raging of the sea." The apology, however, contains a judgment. Wesleyanism, it seems, was regarded by Mr. Toplady and his supporters as a depravity of the Christian religion, as a rank and rude sort of heresy of the lowest and most virulent character; and it was proper, therefore, to treat it as St. Paul authorized his fellow-laborers to treat the vilest apostasy and hypocrisy of their generation. Such, in fact, was the treatment given to Methodism by these belligerent divines, and by the public opinion which they manufactured.

Occasionally, it is true, there would be found a man too just by nature to permit such unmerited reproach to be cast upon the Wesleyans without a show of candor; but the warm-blooded controversialist saw enough of evil in Methodism, and in its supporters, to drown all sense of right and wrong in relation to them: "To occupy the place of argument," says he, "it has been alleged that 'Mr. Wesley is an old

Arminianism, toward the beginning of the last century." Methodism, therefore, according to the Calvinistic judgment of that day, is *Pelagianism*, though one of its articles of religion comdemns it in terms and by name!

Digitized by Google

man;' and the Church of Rome is still older. Is that any reason why the enormities, either of the mother or the son, should pass unchastised? It has also been suggested that 'Mr. Wesley is a very laborious man;' not more laborious, I presume, than a certain active being, who is said to go to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it: nor yet more laborious, I should imagine, than certain ancient sectarians, concerning whom it was long ago said: 'Wo unto you scribes, pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte:' nor by any means so usefully laborious as a certain diligent member of the community, respecting whose variety of occupations the public have lately received the following intelligence: 'The truth of the following instance of industry may be depended on: a poor man, with a large family, now cries milk every morning in Lothbury and the neighborhood of the Royal Exchange; at eleven, he wheels about a barrow of potatoes; at one, he cleans shoes at the Exchange; after dinner, cries milk again; in the evening, sells sprats; and at night, finishes the measure of his labor as a watchman.' Mr. Sellon, moreover, reminds me that 'while the shepherds are quarreling, the wolf gets into the sheepfold, not impossible: but it so happens that the present quarrel is not among the shepherds, but with the '*Wolf*' himself; which quarrel is warranted by every maxim of pastoral meekness and fidelity. I am further told that, 'while I am be-rating the Arminians, Rome and the devil laugh in their sleeves.' Admitting that Mr. Sellon might derive this anecdote from the fountain-head, the parties themselves [the Arminians and the devil], yet, as neither they [the Arminians and the devil] nor he [Mr. Sellon] are very conspicuous for veracity, I construe the intelligence by the rule of reverse, though authenticated by the deposition of their right trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor [Mr. Wesley]. Once more, I am charged with 'excessive superciliousness and majesty of pride:' and why not charged with

Digitized by Google

having seven heads and ten horns, and a tail as long as a bell-rope? After all, what has my pride, or my humility, to do with the argument in hand? Whether I am haughty, or meek, is of no more consequence either to that, or to the public, than whether I am tall or short: however, I am at this very time giving one proof that my 'majesty of pride' can stoop—stoop even to ventilate the impertinences of Mr. Sellon. But, however frivolous his cavils, the principles for which he contends are of the most pernicious nature and tendency. I must repeat what already seems to have given him so much offence, that *Arminianism came from Rome and leads thither again.*'" Toplady was convinced, on a review of what he had written against Mr. Wesley, that his objections were not only too numerous, but contradictory; and, therefore, to keep up an appearance of consistency, he compares Methodism to the image of the king of Babylon: "Your *scheme of doctrines* reminds me of the feet of a certain visionary image, which, the sacred penmen acquaint us, seemed to be composed of iron and clay: heterogeneous materials, which may, indeed, be put together, but will never incorporate with each other." Not contented with this comparison, which was too dignified to suit his style of feeling in relation to the subject, he tries his hand again: "Somewhat like the necromantic soup, of which you have probably read in the tragedy of Macbeth: your doctrines may be stirred into a chaotic jumble, but witchcraft itself would strive in vain to bring them into coalition." [1]

In this same strain, the champion of Calvinism in Great Britain goes on, through nearly the whole of his life-time, defaming the Wesleyan system and the character of its founder and adherents. He brings every conceivable accusation against them. So low was his opinion of Methodism, and of its author, that he shrunk not from using the grossest

[1] Toplady's Works, vol. v., p. 323.

Digitized by Google

terms respecting them, in one place charging the Methodists with being semi-papists, in another accusing them of Jacobinism, and in another making the venerable father of this movement a blasphemer and a liar: "Without the least heat, or emotion, I *plainly* say Mr. Wesley lies."[4]

Such language, I know, will be regarded as sufficient proof that Mr. Toplady was not the good man I have represented him. But the key to this sort of treatment must not be neglected. This representative of Calvinism honestly regarded Wesleyanism as the work of the devil and the Wesleys as the devil's leading emissaries in Great Britain; and to tell the father of lies of his darling sin, or to accuse him and his supporters of any of their crimes, could not be itself a crime in the opinion of so warm a controversialist. The Roman idea, too, that no good Christian would be called to account for any severity against heretics, had not then left the public mind in the most enlightened European countries, and was expressly acknowledged by this Calvinistic minister of the Church of England: "Bad works," he says distinctly, "if done to heretics, are transubstantiated into good ones."[5]

His sincerity, at all events, in his controversy with Mr. Wesley and the Methodists, is not for one moment to be doubted. Methodism was a schism; it was a heresy; it was a rebellion raised against true religion under satanic influence; it was producing a wide and most baneful effect on the honest industrial classes of Great Britain; it was the duty of every good minister, of every well-wisher of the race, to oppose it, to persecute it, to annihilate or expel it; and the necessary means would not be too closely scrutinized by a just God, who must hold it in still deeper hatred, as his comprehension of its diabolical character and tendencies was the more perfect. The author of it, however, was a human being; he was a man perhaps not entirely given over to the

[4] Toplady's Works, vol. v., p. 413. [5] Toplady's Works, vol. v., p. 357.

Digitized by Google

devil by any conscious act; there might be hope of his recovery even on Calvinistic principles, which, floating between free will and fixed fate, leave a sort of indefinable and contradictory possibility of salvation to those who are found fighting for a season against the decrees of God; he might be prayed for, at least, as prayer is often but the expression of desire held in meek reliance upon whatever may turn out to have been the established will of Providence; and, consequently, this rank Calvinist, this Coryphæus of the Church of England, after lifting his heart to Heaven for the conversion of the venerable Wesley, addresses him in terms of mingled severity and concern: "Time, sir, I am informed," says the writer, "has already whitened your locks; and the hour must shortly come, which will transmit you to the tribunal of that God, on whose sovereignty a great part of your life has been one continued assault. At that bar, I too must hold up my hand. Omniscience only can tell which of us shall first appear before the Judge of all. I shortly may, you shortly must. The part you have been permitted to act in the religious world, will sooner or later sit heavy on your mind. 'Mixed in the warm converse of life, we think with men: on a death-bed, with God.' Depend upon it, a period will arrive when the Father's electing mercy, and the Messiah's adorable righteousness, will appear in your eyes, *even in yours*, to be the only safe anchorage for a dying *sinner*. I mean, unless you are actually given over to final obduration!" [*]

The same man, indeed, who could hold such opinions of Mr. Wesley, who could entitle one work written in opposition to him A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine, in which the author (to use his own words) "fixes his foot on Arminianism as being, in its several branches, the gangrene of the Protestant churches and the predominant evil of the day," and

[*] Toplady's Works, vol. v., p. 439.

Digitized by Google

another An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered, could also call for the mercy of an offended God to rest upon the miserable heretic, and then retire to his closet and sing the real language of his heart under a higher and holier inspiration:

> "Rock of ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee;
> Let the water and the blood,
> From thy wounded side which flowed,
> Be of sin the double cure—
> Save from WRATH and make me *pure!*"

The explanation of it all is this: that, in the view of Mr. Toplady, and of the religious world in general at that day, Methodism was a movement set on foot at the instigation of the devil, made up of a mixture of many of the most abandoned heresies, and propagated by men in whose composition ignorance, irreverence, irreligion, ambition, and purposed opposition to the will of God, were the chief ingredients!

And this was the general opinion of Methodism, at least among the Calvinists of Great Britain, and quite extensively in the Church of England, from the days of Toplady till the period (1807—1810) of the next systematic attack upon it by the Rev. Sidney Smith in the Edinburgh Review. Between the two periods, two or three scores of commonplace works had been sent into the world against it. Some, like Bishop Lavington's treatise, had made it out to be nothing but a covert revival of popery, in which Mr. Wesley was the confidential agent of the Roman pontiff against the harmony and integrity of the Church of England. Others, like Ingram's Causes of the Increase of Methodism, unwilling to ascribe to it the dignity of being the work of so illustrious a personage as a bishop of Rome, denounced Wesley and his adherents as a set of deluded fanatics, or commiserable lunatics, whose stupidity of intellect was balanced only by the vulgarity of their social standing. After the death of Toplady, which occurred

Digitized by Google

in about seven years from the time of his address to Mr. Wesley, leaving the man he had so warned of his near approach to death to survive himself for about fourteen years, the memoirs of the champion of Calvinism in the Church of England were published; and, in that production, an estimate is given of the author of Methodism which was still quite commonly received by his opponents in England: "His understanding, strictly speaking, was but ordinary. His imagination was fertile in littleness. The reader is disturbed and disgusted by the indistinctness of his ideas, and the inconclusiveness of his reasonings, the glaring misrepresentations and plagiarisms of his pages. His arguments have been made up of undigested materials, heterogeneous and repugnant, without either shape or form; the frivolousness of their design and application have been completely destroyed by being duly set in array against each other. If a prize had been given to dullness, and the most superlative conceit, this gentleman might have started with the certainty of triumph. His resentment toward those who differed from him was intense. His self-importance was astonishing, so that no reprehension, given in ever so mild a way, could instruct him." Some years subsequent to this first biography of Mr. Toplady, the celebrated Dr. Pringle wrote another, in which he seems to hint that his hero's extravagance of language must be softened a little in order to making it consistent with the truth: "It seems to have been his [Toplady's] favorite game [to scourge Methodism]: and whenever it started, he followed the chase till he run it down. So fully was he versed in this controversy, that he never seems more master of his subject, than when dissecting and confuting Arminianism. Many a sore drubbing poor Mr. Wesley and his adherents received from his able pen." And yet, this more candid writer would not quite subscribe to the intellectual rank awarded the miserable heretic by his predecessor: "This, to say the least"—in reply to the language of the

Digitized by Google

first biographer—"is not the language of either soberness or truth. John Wesley (candor should have made even his keenest opponents allow) gave may proofs of great acuteness, learning and piety." There were many, perhaps, who would have indorsed the learning and the acuteness of Mr. Wesley, but who would have suffered torture before consenting to offer any compliments to his piety. From the day of his return from Georgia to the day of his decease, a period of over half a century, he had been so systematically and energetically defamed, that the majority of the people of England not personally acquainted with him were at least suspicious of his moral character; and his opponents well knew that to blacken his personal reputation was the same thing, in its popular effect, as the answering of his arguments and the uprooting of his influence. The consequence was, that England had never seen the man against whom there had been leveled so many, so various, and so sweeping and unanswerable slanders. The present generation cannot realize the amount of abuse heaped upon the head of the first Methodist. He was slandered in relation to his "matrimonial intercourse" with Miss Hopkey of Savannah; he was slandered respecting his treatment of his own wife; he was slandered in regard to his neglect of his father's family; he was slandered as to what he allowed and disallowed among his associates and followers; and tales were constantly put into circulation, either from his antagonists in respect to his own character and conduct, or as coming from him concerning the character and conduct of those opposing him. As a single specimen, I will refer the reader to the published letters of Sir Richard Hill, one of Toplady's warm admirers and defenders. After the demise of Toplady, a story arose that he had, on his death-bed, recanted all he had written and said in opposition to Mr. Wesley, and that, in spite of this mark of repentance, he had died in despair and with the rankest blasphemy upon his lips.

Digitized by Google

This gossip, plainly a falsehood, and evidently manufactured for the very purpose of being palmed off as a Methodist slander upon the champion of Calvinism in England, was reported as having started with Mr. Wesley. Sir Richard, on hearing of it, and estimating Mr. Wesley so low as to imagine him capable of such a piece of infamy, published a letter in the General Advertiser, Friday, the 18th October, 1779, charging him with the fabrication of the story. Mr. Wesley was used to these public attacks and made no answer; and on the 29th of November, 1779, there appeared in the magazines of England a second letter from the same gentleman, reiterating the same charge of defamation. The first communication was anonymous; the second was signed; and it may now be read and preserved as a fair specimen of the unfavorable judgment passed upon Methodism, and upon all connected with it, between the decease of Toplady and the second persecution of the Methodists originated by Sydney Smith: "The cause of my thus publicly addressing you," says Sir Richard in the opening sentence of his second letter, "is owing to an information I received, that you wished to know who was the author of a letter, which appeared in the General Advertiser, on Friday the 18th of October last, wherein were some queries put to you concerning certain reports, which it was supposed you had spread, relative to the illness and death of the late Mr. Augustus Toplady. I was further given to understand, that you had declared your intention of answering that letter, if the writer would annex his name to it. This being the case, though no name can at all alter facts, yet as I really wish to be rightly informed myself, and as the reports which have been propagated about Mr. Toplady have much staggered and grieved many serious Christians, I now (under my real signature) beg with all plainness, and with no other design than that the real truth may be known, again to propound the same questions to you which were put in that letter, of

Digitized by Google

which I confess myself to have been the sole author. And as I hear you have been pleased to call the letter a scurrilous one, I should be glad if you would point out to me wherein that scurrility consists; for though it were anonymous, I am not in the least conscious that there is anything in it unbecoming that respect, which might be due to a gentleman of your venerable age and function; and when you have shown me wherein I have been culpable, I shall then, readily and submissively, ask your pardon. The letter itself I shall annex to this. The queries contained in it may be reduced to the following:

"1. Did you, sir, or did you not, tell Mr. Thomas Robinson of Hilderthorpe, near Bridlington in Yorkshire, that Mr. Toplady died in black despair, blaspheming; and that a greater imposition never was imposed on the public than that published by his friends relative to his death?

"2. Did you ever tell the same in substance to the Rev. Mr. Greaves, curate to Mr. Fletcher of Madeley, or to any other person?

"3. Did you, or did you not, say that none of Mr. Toplady's friends were permitted to see him during his illness?"

After stating the reasons why he had been led to put these interrogatories to Mr. Wesley, the chief of which was a letter of inquiry from a Mr. Gawkrodger, the writer proceeds: "Methinks, sir, this letter breathes the language of real Christianity, and of a heart deeply concerned and interested in the welfare of one from whose works I know that Mr. G. had received the highest delight and satisfaction. He had read the account of Mr. Toplady's illness and death; he rejoiced to see the doctrines of the Gospel confirmed and established in the experience of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ; and his own heart found strong consolation whilst he meditated on the triumphant victory which his late brother in the ministry had obtained over the king of terrors, through faith in our glorious Immanuel.

Digitized by Google

"Amidst these views and meditations he is told by a pious friend and neighbor of his, that Mr. John Wesley had assured him that Mr. Toplady died blaspheming, in black despair; that none of his friends were permitted to see him in his illness; and that the account of his death, published by his friends, was a gross imposition on the public; and that a preacher of Mr. Wesley's had moreover asserted the same, with this further circumstance, that the person who attended Mr. Toplady in his illness, struck with horror at his awful departure, had joined the Methodists.

"Overwhelmed with grief and amazement at this declaration, and the authority produced in defence of it (an authority which he dares not call in question), he writes to me to be further informed in the matter. Upon the receipt of this letter, I thought it best to go to the fountain-head, in order to investigate the truth, and therefore called upon you, in the public papers, to know whether you did, or did not, assert the things which are charged upon you. If you did not assert them, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Greaves, and several other persons, have treated you in a manner the most injurious, by making use of the sanction of your name for the propagation of a most wicked and malicious lie. If you did assert them, either you had or had not authority for your assertions; if you had no authority, then you, yourself, must have been the inventor of them. If you had authority, then you must know whence that authority came. In order, therefore, to exculpate your own character before the world, be pleased now to name that authority. Tell us how you became so well acquainted with what passed in Mr. Toplady's sick-chamber, and on his dying bed, when even his most dear and intimate friends were not permitted to see him? Did his nurse, Mrs. Stirling, who attended him, and was with him when he died, communicate this intelligence? I hear she has called upon you on purpose to vindicate herself from the charge of any such assertion, and is ready to

Digitized by Google

declare to all the world, that throughout Mr. Toplady's long illness to the hour of his dissolution, prayer and praise, joy and triumph in the God of his salvation, were the continual employments of his lips and heart. But as your conduct will make one of the many friends who were permitted to see Mr. Toplady in his illness, think it necessary to give the public some further particulars relative to the state of his soul in that trying season, I shall only in this place present you with a short abstract from a letter which I received from a worthy friend of Mr. Toplady's, soon after his departure." The extract next succeeds; and then comes the real drift of all this display of words—a tirade on Mr. Wesley and his movement—which was the only real object of this lawyer-like communication: "We can now look to no other source from whence these reports may have flowed, than to the most deliberate malice of Mr. Toplady's avowed foes, among whom, notwithstanding your continual preaching about '*love, love, peace, peace, my brethren*,' I fear you are chief. Till, therefore, you produce your authority for what you told Mr. Thomas Robinson, and others, I have full right, nay, I am absolutely necessitated to fix upon you, Rev. sir, as the raiser and fabricator of this most nefarious report, which I cannot look upon as a common falsity, but as a most malicious attempt to invalidate and set aside the testimony which God, the Eternal Spirit himself, was pleased to bear to his own truth, and to his own work, upon the heart of a dying believer, and even to turn that testimony into the blasphemies of Satan. And in this view of it, how far short it falls of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, must be left to your awful consideration!

"When one Jane Cowper, a person belonging to your societies, died, you were ready enough to give your imprimatur and recommendation to every wild flight of fancy she uttered, as 'all strong, sterling sense, strictly agreeable to sound reason.' 'Here,' says Mr. Wesley in his preface,

Digitized by Google

'are no extravagant flights, no mystic reveries, no unscriptural enthusiasm. The sentiments are all just and noble." The cause is plain. The Lord, it seems, had promised this Jane Cowper 'that Mr. John Wesley's latter works should exceed his former; therefore, she must be canonized; but Mr. Toplady, in his dying avowal, had borne his open testimony both against Mr. Wesley and his principles; therefore *he* must be sent blaspheming and despairing into the bottomless pit. Behold, sir, what self partiality and a desire to make known your own importance leads you to! The like spirit *runs through all your publications*, whether *sermons*, *journals*, *appeals*, *preservatives*, *Arminian magazines*, etc. etc., in *all* of which, it is too evident, that THE GRAND DESIGN *is that of trumpeting forth your own praises.* Tedious and fulsome as this appears in the eyes of *men of sense and judgment*, yet a gentleman of Mr. Wesley's cunning and subtlety can from hence suck no small advantage, as there are MULTITUDES *amongst your own people*, who, through a blind attachment to your person, and a no less blind zeal to promote your interests, look upon it as *perfectly right and proper*, and are at all times, and upon all occasions, ready to pay the most implicit obedience to your *ipse dixits*, and to believe, or disbelieve, just as you would have them. But I have *nothing to do with such bigots:* to endeavor to open their eyes by argument would be as vain as to attempt to wash the Ethiopian white, or to change the leopard's spots. There are, however, many persons of good sense and true piety in your societies, who, in spite of all your *artifices*, begin to *form a judgment of you according to facts.* It is for the benefit of such persons, as well as to vindicate the memory of a departed saint from YOUR *foul aspersions*, that you are presented with this epistle, though I confess I was sometime before I could bring myself to write or print it. I considered that a misjudging, prejudiced world would be happy to take advantage from its contents, and to cry, 'there, there, so

Digitized by Google

would we have it; the Methodists are all fallen together by the ears and are discharging their artillery at one another.' I considered again that, as to expose you was not my motive, so to bring you to any submission was never in human power. I had well-nigh resolved to be silent. On the other hand, I perceived that the sealing testimony, which God vouchsafed to his own truths in the experience of Mr. Toplady, during his illness, and at the time of his death, was not only denied by you, but even construed into a gross imposition of his friends to deceive the public and thereby the good effects which might justly have been hoped for were in great measure counteracted; that his enemies were hardened against the truths he maintained and so ably vindicated; and even his friends staggered by the shocking accounts forged and propagated; I say, when I saw this to be the case, I determined (to adopt an expression of your own) to 'write and print.' I said, let God be true and every man a liar. If you make no reply, I cannot avoid construing your silence into an acquiescence of your being guilty of the matter brought against you. If you do 'write and print,' in answer, let me beg you, for once to avoid quibbles and evasions." [1]

[1] An account of the life and writings of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, prefixed to his works, vol. i. pp. 122-131.

This, certainly, is very plain and pungent language for one gentleman to employ and publish in relation to another. It was a charge, not only against the moral character of Mr. Wesley, but against the morality of a very large majority of his people. Methodism itself, in fact, was involved by it in the sin of slander. It was slander, too, under the most degrading circumstances, as it was leveled against a gentleman who had long stood before the world as the leading opponent of the Wesleyan system; and the public were sure to hold Mr. Wesley to the alternative, either of proving the truth of the story thus laid at his door, or of denying that he had had any connection with it. Neither of these things, however, did Mr. Wesley do. He did not undertake to maintain the truth of the rumor of Mr. Toplady's recantation; for there was no truth in it; and Mr. Wesley was probably as happy as any man in England to know that his antagonist

Digitized by Google

With all this severity of Sir Richard Hill, the language of his attack is considerably more mild than that of his client; and each successive biographer of Toplady, in the reviews of

had died in the triumphs of supporting faith. His joy over this glorious death was not diminished, indeed, when he came to know that one of the last acts of the dying man was a distinct and emphatic approval of every line and word uttered against the Wesleyan movement. "So certain and so satisfied am I of the truth of all that I have ever written, that, were I now sitting up in my dying bed, with a pen and ink in my hand, and all the religious and controversial writings I ever published (and more especially those relating to Mr. John Wesley and the Arminian controversy), whether respecting facts or doctrines, could at once be displayed to my view, I should not strike out a single line relative to him or them." This solemn act of self-approval, in fact, was well known to Mr. Wesley at the time he was addressed by Sir Richard Hill; and his opponents in Great Britain were consequently all the more surprised that he did not, under his own hand, clear himself from the crime laid against him. It has been a wonder ever since, at least to many people, why Mr. Wesley did not come out and say, either that he had reported no such rumor against Mr. Toplady, or that he had done so upon authority found to be unreliable, or that there was some mistake altogether in connecting his name with so foul a slander. But there is no difficulty in his silence to a person who has had any experience similar to that of Mr. Wesley. A high-minded man, conscious of more than ordinary respect to his personal character, while he would gladly correct any slight misunderstanding in relation to his conduct, scorns to enter the lists of personal controversy against those who, from simple malice or for party purposes, charge him with crimes which his whole previous life is sufficient to prove false. Such a man knows, too, that the accuser will always manage to have the last word; and it generally happens that a personal newspaper attack, or a popular rumor, especially if without foundation, becomes more and more virulent as it proceeds. Mr. Wesley, therefore, with his characteristic prudence, made no reply to the partisan epistles of Sir Richard Hill. Like his Lord and Master under similar circumstances, "he answered to never a word;" like Franklin and Washington, when accused by their personal enemies of treason, he relied on the overwhelming but self-denying argument of silence for his defense; and the consequence has been, that he saved his time for better purposes, and his dignity from so mean a contact, granting the favor of oblivion to his opponents, and maintaining his own

Digitized by Google

this controversy called for by the nature of the case, compelled by a sense of justice, or by the progress of public sentiment, expressed a yet more favorable opinion of Wesley and his movement. Wesley died in 1791, generally respected in Great Britain as a sincere Christian, but as the founder of a sect of fanatics, who, ignorant and presumptuous, were supposed to arrogate all earnest Christianity to themselves. This was the general judgment of the intelligent classes, with only occasional individual exceptions, till the opening of the present century. In the halls of the English universities, even in those of Oxford, where John Wesley had been a noted fellow of his College, and in those of every literary institution of the country, Methodism was always spoken of as a sorry delusion of a well-read and well-meaning man. This was its established reputation at court, in parliament, in episcopal palaces, in the manses of charitable clergymen, in every commercial circle, among all the guilds of tradesmen and mechanics, and so down to the common level of the laboring multitude. This was its reputation at the time of the founding of the Edinburgh Review; and the founder of that

position by keeping closely to his life's great object. This is the true wisdom, however difficult of practice, in nearly every case of defamation. The better part of mankind will not credit an infamous charge against a gentleman of good previous reputation, without something like a judicial examination, which is impossible to be had by a newspaper or popular setting forth of rumors; they will, in the meantime, hold the propagators of defamation to a strict account for their nefarious business; and their sympathies will be with the man whom these unlawful and generally interested and mercenary proceedings have been designed to injure. It is an old maxim, I know, that "a lie will travel a league while truth is putting on her boots;" but the truth, conscious of itself, is not only endowed with the composure of innocence, but knows also that error, like the classic herald, will in the race outrun her breath. All good and true men depend more on what they know themselves to be, than on what the world, or any part of it, may think or say about them; and when defamed, silence is generally their strength.

Digitized by Google

magazine, the Rev. Sidney Smith, a clergyman of the Church of England by profession, but a wit in fact, seeking as much as possible to strike the most responsive chord in the management of his columns, and at the same time to gratify his clerical associates, opened his literary career with a most violent persecution of the Methodistic movement. Attributing the missionary operations of the day to the influence of Methodism, he began his work by a merciless assault on "Missionaries and Missions." His article was answered; and he rejoined in still more sarcastic terms than he had employed at first. Then comes his celebrated review of the work of Robert Acklem Ingram, B.D., on the Causes of the Increase of Methodism, in which he concentrates all the power and brilliancy of his genius in the attempt to render ridiculous everything connected with the Wesleyan system. "Mr. Ingram," says the caustic reviewer, "has fallen into the common mistake of supposing his reader to be as well acquainted with his subject as he is himself, and has talked a great deal about dissenters, without giving us any distinct notions of the spirit which pervades these people—the objects they have in view—or the degree of talent which is to be found among them. To remedy this capital defect, we shall endeavor to set before the eyes of the reader a complete section of the tabernacle, and to present him with a near view of those sectaries, who are at present at work upon the destruction of the orthodox churches, and are destined hereafter, perhaps, to act as conspicuous a part in public affairs, as the children of Sion did in the time of Cromwell."

After stating the sources from which he derives his facts, he gives his definition of what he means by Methodism: "We shall use the general term of Methodism to designate these three classes of *fanatics*, not troubling ourselves to point out the finer shades and nicer discriminations of *lunacy*, but treating them all as in one general conspiracy against common sense and rational orthodox Christianity."

Digitized by Google

Methodism, therefore, in the eyes of that literary circle by which the Edinburgh Review was established and supported, was *fanaticism, lunacy*, not conscious deviltry, as asserted by its original opposers; and the writer proceeds to deal out some twelve pages of the religious experiences of a great variety of persons calling themselves Methodists, collected from the leading Methodistic magazines of that day, in proof of his opinion of this religious denomination. The cases cited are all of that class, now so universally received and credited, but then novel and not understood, which show the possibility of a sudden conversion, of the special interposition of God in bringing individuals to this result, and of such force of an awakened conscience as would not suffer a person to take usury on money and perform other acts now generally condemned but at that time allowed.

The next charge against the Wesleyan movement is that of arrogance. "The Methodists consider themselves as constituting a chosen and separate people, living in a land of atheists and voluptuaries. The expressions by which they designate their own sects are *the dear people—the elect—the people of God.* The rest of mankind are *carnal people—the people of this world.* The children of Israel were not more separated, through the favor of God, from the Egyptians, than the Methodists are, in their own estimation, from the rest of mankind. We had hitherto supposed that the disciples of the established churches in England and in Scotland had been Christians, and that, after baptism, duly performed by the appointed minister, and participation in the customary worship of these two churches, Christianity was the religion of which they were to be considered as members. We see, however, in these publications, men of twenty or thirty years of age first called to a knowledge of Christ *under a sermon* by the Rev. Mr. Venn, or first admitted into the church *under a sermon* by the Rev. Mr. Romaine. The apparent admission turns out to have been a mere mockery, and the pseudo

Digitized by Google

Christian to have no religion at all, till the business was really and effectually done under these sermons by Mr. Venn and Mr. Romaine."

The reviewer then complains of the almost miraculous success of Methodism. He says that its propagators are industrious in their work beyond all competition; that they stoop to such conversation with the common people as cannot fail to give them the command of the lower orders; that the regular clergy could not descend to such popular practices without such a loss to their personal dignity as would, "upon the whole and for a great number of years," be disastrous to religion; and yet that, in spite of this apparent contradiction, they had gained an influence among the higher classes which threatened in time to take possession of the government: "We must remember," he says, "in addition to these trifling specimens of their active disposition, that the Methodists have found a powerful party in the House of Commons, who, by the neutrality which they affect and partly adhere to, are courted both by ministers and opposition; that they have gained complete possession of the India-House; and under the pretence, or perhaps with the serious intention of educating young people for India, will take care to introduce (as much as they dare without provoking attention) their own peculiar tenets. In fact, one thing must always be taken for granted respecting these people—that wherever they gain a foothold, or whatever be the institutions to which they give birth, proselytism will be their main object; everything else is a mere instrument—this is their principal aim. When every proselyte is not only an addition to their temporal power, but when the act of conversion which gains a vote, saves (as they suppose) a soul from destruction—it is quite needless to state, that every faculty of their minds will be dedicated to this most important of all temporal and eternal concerns. Their attack upon the church is not merely confined to publications: it is generally under-

Digitized by Google

stood that they have a very considerable fund for the purchase of livings, to which, of course, ministers of their own profession are always presented."

The growth of Methodism had been so great, indeed, at the time when the Edinburgh Review began to thunder its broadsides upon it, that all England was astonished; and the Rev. Sidney, who was something of a philosopher as well as wit, set himself to work, not only to give a general summary of its principles, but to present distinctly, under six separate heads, the leading causes of its wonderful success. Nothing can be more interesting, at this stage of the progress of Methodism in the world, than these strictures of the witty, caustic, critical, but philosophical and yet skeptical Sidney Smith:

"1. It is obvious that this description of Christians entertain very erroneous and dangerous notions of the present judgments of God. A belief, that Providence interferes in all the little actions of our lives, refers all merit and demerit to bad and good fortune, and causes the successful man to be always considered as a good man, and the unhappy man as the object of divine vengeance. It furnishes ignorant and designing men with a power which is sure to be abused; the cry of *a judgment, a judgment*, it is always easy to make, but not easy to resist. It encourages the grossest superstitions; for if the Deity rewards and punishes on every slight occasion, it is quite impossible but that such a helpless being as man will set himself at work to discover the will of heaven in the appearance of outward nature, and to apply all the phenomena of thunder, lightning, wind, and every striking appearance, to the regulation of his conduct, as the poor Methodist, when he rode into Piccadilly in a thunderstorm, and imagined that all the uproar of the elements was a mere hint to him not to preach at Romaine's chapel. Hence a great deal of error and a great deal of secret misery. This doctrine of a

Digitized by Google

theocracy must necessarily place an excessive power in the hands of the clergy. It applies so instantly and so tremendously to men's hopes and fears, that it must make the priest omnipotent over the people, as it always has done where it has been established. It has a great tendency to check human exertions, and to prevent the employment of those secondary means of effecting an object which Providence has placed in our power. The doctrine of the immediate and perpetual interference of divine Providence is not true. If two men travel the same road, the one to rob, the other to relieve a fellow-creature who is starving, will any but the most *fanatic* contend, that they do not both run the same chance of falling over a stone, and breaking their legs? And is it not matter of fact that the robber often returns safe, and the just man sustains the injury? Have not the soundest divines of both churches always urged this unequal distribution of good and evil, in the present state, as one of the strongest natural arguments for a future state of retribution? Have not they contended, and well and admirably contended, that the supposition of such a state is absolutely necessary to our notion of the justice of God—absolutely necessary to restore order to that moral confusion which we all observe and deplore in the present world? The man who places religion upon a false basis is the greatest enemy to religion. If victory is always to the just and good, how is the fortune of impious conquerors to be accounted for? Why do they erect dynasties and found families which last for centuries? The reflecting mind whom you have instructed in this manner, and for present effect only, naturally comes upon you hereafter with difficulties of this sort; he finds he has been deceived; and you will soon discover that, in breeding up a *fanatic*, you have unwittingly laid the foundation of an atheist. The honest and the orthodox method is to prepare young people for the world as it naturally exists; to tell them they will often find vice perfectly successful; virtue exposed

Digitized by Google

to a long train of afflictions; that they must bear this patiently and look to another world for its rectification.

"2. The second doctrine which it is necessary to notice among the Methodists is the doctrine of inward impulse and emotions, which, it is quite plain, must lead, if universally insisted upon and preached among the common people, to every species of folly and enormity. When a human being believes that his internal feelings are the monitions of God, and that these monitions must govern his conduct; and when a great stress is purposely laid upon these inward feelings in all the discourses from the pulpit, it is of course impossible to say to what a pitch of extravagance it may not be carried, under the influence of such dangerous doctrines.

"3. The Methodists hate pleasures and amusements; no theatre, no cards, no dancing, no punchinello, no dancing dogs, no blind fiddlers; all the amusements of the rich and of the poor must disappear wherever these gloomy people get a footing. It is not the abuse of pleasure which they attack, but the interspersion of pleasure, however much it is guarded by good sense and moderation; it is not only wicked to hear the licentious plays of Congreve, but wicked to hear Henry V. or the School for Scandal; it is not only dissipated to run about to all the parties in London and Edinburgh—but dancing is not *fit for any being who is preparing himself for eternity*. *Ennui*, wretchedness, melancholy, groans, and sighs are the offerings which these unhappy men make to a Deity, who has covered the earth with gay colors, and scented it with rich perfumes, and shown us, by the plan and order of his works, that he has given to man something better than a bare existence, and scattered over his creation a thousand superfluous joys, which are totally unnecessary to the mere support of life.

"4. The Methodists lay very little stress upon practical righteousness. They do not say to their people, do not be deceitful; do not be idle; get rid of your bad passions; or

Digitized by Google

at least (if they do say these things) they say them very seldom. Not that they preach faith without works; for if they told the people that they might rob and murder with impunity, the civil magistrate must be compelled to interfere with such doctrine; but they say a great deal about faith, and very little about works. What are commonly called the mysterious parts of our religion, are brought into the foreground, much more than the doctrines which lead to practice—and this among the lowest of the community. The Methodists have hitherto been accused of dissenting from the Church of England. This, so far as relates to mere subscription to articles, is not true; but they differ in their choice of the articles upon which they dilate and expand, and to which they appear to give a preference, from the stress which they place upon them. There is nothing heretical in saying, that God *sometimes* intervenes with his special providence; but these people differ from the established church in the degree in which they insist upon this doctrine. In the hands of a man of sense and education, it is a safe doctrine—in the management of the Methodists, we have seen how ridiculous and degrading it becomes. In the same manner, a clergyman of the Church of England would not do his duty, if he did not insist upon the necessity of faith, as well as of good works; but as he believes that it is much more easy to give credit to doctrines, than to live well, he labors most in those points where human nature is the *most* liable to prove defective. Because he does so, he is accused of giving up the articles of his faith, by men who have their partialities also in doctrine, but partialities not founded upon the same sound discretion and knowledge of human nature.

"5. The Methodists are always desirous of making men more religious than it is possible, from the constitution of human nature, to make them. If they could succeed as much as they wish to succeed, there would be at once an end of delving and spinning, and of every exertion of human indus-

Digitized by Google

try. Men must eat, and drink, and work; and if you wish to fix upon them high and elevated notions, as the *ordinary* furniture of their minds, you do these two things—you drive men of warm temperament mad—and you introduce, in the rest of the world, a low and shocking familiarity with words and images, which every real friend to religion would wish to keep sacred: '*The friends of the dear Redeemer who are in the habit of visiting the Isle of Thanet.*' Is it possible that this mixture of the most awful with the most familiar images, so common among Methodists now, and with the enthusiasts in the time of Cromwell, must not in the end divest religion of all the deep and solemn impressions which it is calculated to produce. In a man of common imagination (as we have before observed) the terror, and the feeling which is first excited, must necessarily be soon separated; but, where the fervor of impression is long preserved, piety ends in bedlam. Accordingly, there is not a madhouse in England, where a considerable part of the patients have not been driven to insanity by the extravagance of these people. We cannot enter such places without seeing a number of honest artisans, covered with blankets, and calling themselves angels and apostles, who, if they had remained contented with the instruction of men of learning and education, would still have been sound masters of their own trades, sober Christians, and useful members of society.

"6. It is impossible not to observe how directly all the doctrine of the Methodists is calculated to gain power among the poor and ignorant. To say, that the Deity governs this world by general rules, and that we must wait for another and a final scene of existence, before vice meets with its merited punishment, and virtue with its merited reward; to preach this up daily would not add a single votary to the tabernacle, nor sell a number of the Methodistical Magazine; but to publish an account of a man who was cured of scrofula by a single sermon—of Providence destroying the inn-keeper

Digitized by Google

at Garstang for appointing a cock-fight near the tabernacle; this promptness of judgment and immediate execution is so much like human justice, and so much better adapted to vulgar capacities, that the system is at once admitted, as soon as any one be found who is impudent or ignorant enough to teach it; and, being once admitted, it produces too strong an effect upon the passions to be easily relinquished. The case is the same with the doctrine of inward impulse, or, as they term it, *experience;* if you preach up to ploughmen and artisans, that every singular feeling which comes across them is a visitation of the Divine Spirit—can there be any difficulty, under the influence of this nonsense, in converting these simple creatures into active and mysterious fools, and making them your slaves for life? It is not possible to raise up any dangerous enthusiasm by telling men to be just, and good, and charitable; but, keep this part of Christianity out of sight, and talk long and enthusiastically, before ignorant people, of the mysteries of our religion, and you will not fail to attract a crowd of followers:—Verily, the tabernacle loveth not that which is simple, intelligible, and leadeth to good sound practice."

Having pointed out the spirit, as he imagined, which pervaded the Wesleyan revival, the reviewer proceeded to state the cause, or causes, of its prosperity and popularity: "The *fanaticism* so prevalent in the present day is one of those evils from which society is never wholly exempt, but which bursts out, at different periods, with peculiar violence, and sometimes overwhelms everything in its course. The last irruption took place about a century and a half ago, and destroyed both church and throne with its tremendous force. Though irresistible, it was short; enthusiasm spent its force—the usual reaction took place; and England was deluged with ribaldry and indecency, because it had been worried with fanatical restrictions. By degrees, however, it was found out, that orthodoxy and loyalty might be secured by other

Digitized by Google

methods than licentious conduct and immodest conversation. The public morals improved; and there appeared as much good sense and moderation upon the subject of religion, as ever can be expected from mankind in large masses. Still, however, the mischief which the Puritans had done was not forgotten; a general suspicion prevailed of the dangers of religious enthusiasm; and the fanatical preacher wanted his accustomed power among a people recently recovered from a religious war, and guarded by songs, proverbs, popular stories, and the general tide of humor and opinions, against all excesses of that nature. About the middle of the last century, however, the character of the *genuine fanatic* was a good deal forgotten, and the memory of the civil wars worn away; the field was clear for extravagance in piety; and causes, which must always produce an immense influence upon the mind of man, were left to their own unimpeded operations. Religion is so noble and powerful a consideration—it is so buoyant and insubmergible—that it may be made by fanatics to carry with it any degree of error and of perilous absurdity. In this instance, Messrs. Whitefield and Wesley happened to begin. They were men of considerable talents; they observed the common decorums of life; they did not run naked into the streets, or pretend to the prophetical character; and therefore they were not committed to Newgate. They preached with great energy to weak people, who first stared, then listened, then believed—then felt the inward feeling of grace, and became as foolish as their teachers could possibly wish them to be: in short, folly ran its ancient course, and human nature evinced itself to be what it always has been under similar circumstances. *The great and permanent cause, therefore, of the increase of Methodism is the cause which has given birth to fanaticism in all ages* —THE FACILITY OF MINGLING HUMAN ERRORS WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF RELIGION." [8]

[8] Edinburgh Review, vol. xi. pp. 341–350. I have taken the pains to

Digitized by Google

This literary persecution of Methodism was not confined to the columns of the Edinburgh Review. It ran through all the British and American periodicals of that day. Methodism was nothing in the world but fanaticism. It had worked its way out of the reputation of being the wickedness of a wily and deep impostor. Wesley was now a good but weak man; his views were in the main according to the letter of revelation, but above and beyond its spirit; and his followers were a set of poor, ignorant, unconscious victims of a species of religious lunacy. There was no intelligence among them. They did not read and try to comprehend the world they lived in, nor themselves even, but spent all the time they could spare from hard labor in sour devotion, having no amusement, no recreation, but the singing of psalms

condense into this small space the substance of Mr. Smith's writings against Methodism; but I have by no means given a fair specimen of his rancor and scurrility. In a subsequent number of his Review (vol. xiv. p. 40), he throws aside the assumed candor of his first assault, and reveals his true sentiments in a style of the coarsest vulgarity: "In routing out," says he, "a nest of consecrated cobblers, and in bringing to light such a perilous heap of trash as we were obliged to work through, in our articles upon Methodists and missionaries, we are generally conceived to have rendered a useful service to the cause of rational religion. Every one, however, at all acquainted with the true character of Methodism, must have known the extent of the abuse and misrepresentation to which we exposed ourselves in such a service. All this obloquy, however we were very willing to encounter, from our conviction of the necessity of exposing and correcting the growing evil of *fanaticism*. In spite of all misrepresentation, we have ever been, and ever shall be, the sincere friends of sober and rational Christianity. We are quite ready, if any fair opportunity occur, to defend it, to the best of our ability, from the tiger spring of infidelity; and we are quite determined, if we can prevent such an evil, *that it shall not be eaten up by the nasty and numerous vermin of Methodism*." Such passages are frequent in these articles; they show the heart of their author in relation to all evangelical religion; for it must be remembered that Methodism, in his vocabulary, though then headed by the esleyans, included the Puritans of Great Britain and America, and all denominations of Christians who laid any stress on what they called conversion.

Digitized by Google

and the making of loud prayers. This was the prevalent idea of the Wesleyan movement in Great Britain and in the United States, not only in the days of Sidney Smith, especially among the educated classes; but it continued to be the general idea of it, in the prouder circles of society, for a generation at least subsequent to the publication of these malignant articles. It was these articles, in fact, more than all the writings of Toplady, of Pringle, of Priestley, and of every previous opponent, which made this view of Methodism the popular one on both sides of the Atlantic. This is now the prevailing opinion of Methodism, in Europe and on this continent, excepting in those places where it has had the opportunity and the power to make a demonstration of its real character. Nine individuals out of every ten, throughout the world, who have had no personal acquaintance with it, if asked to express their opinion of it in a single word, would say that they regarded it as a sort of successful fanaticism.

There are exceptions, of course, from the number made up of the one in ten, in every latitude and longitude; and there is occasionally to be found, among the more bigoted and less enlightened of its opponents, a solitary man, who, unwilling to show it the mercy of calling it a lunacy, goes back to the original charge of conscious and wicked imposition. There have been such singular characters all the way along through the several generations of its history; and there are a few still living, in England and in this country, who make Methodism, not a system of delusion simply, but a settled and determined course of irreligion, immorality, and deviltry of the boldest and rankest order. It is only a few years ago that a book appeared in England, the purpose of which was to show that Wesley was a very wicked man, and that Methodism is "the gangrene of modern religious history;" and here in the United States, in New England, a couple of volumes have fallen from the press, whose estimate of the Wesleyan revival is that it is solely the work of the devil:

Digitized by Google

"I am now coming under the necessity of saying some things which will be unpleasant for me to say, and for many to read. That I take no pleasure in speaking of the faults of Methodism, may be learned from the testimony of my stated hearers, who will bear me witness that the name *Methodism* has been strange to my pulpit. But since Providence now opens the way for me to speak of the results of near twenty years' observation, made here upon the throbbings of the very heart of Methodism, I feel called upon to record my deliberately formed judgment." Such is the language of the Rev. Parsons Cooke, D.D., a Congregational clergyman of Lynn, Massachusetts, after having given an account of the introduction of Methodism into that beautiful sea-port. Then, in his first volume, he devotes nearly a hundred pages to what he styles "An Estimate of Methodism;" and the second volume is wholly dedicated to this subject. The author rambles in his style, and mixes with his general theme many foreign topics; but the substance of his opinion can be drawn very conclusively from one or two quotations: "When Methodism came into Lynn," says he, "it came to claim its own. Whatever hindered its coming hither, Puritanism did not. Calvinism was not here in any living force. For a long time, all the preaching that was in Lynn had been a preaching of just the same doctrines that are now heard in our Methodist pulpits. So, when Jesse Lee arrived to plant the Methodist standard, he declared that he had not for a long time felt himself so much as if at home and among Methodists. And why should he not be at home? The people were like Methodists, because they were Methodists. The whole current of their preaching for fifty years had been the preaching of Methodist doctrines, without Methodist forms and names. The difference between Mr. Henchman's preaching"—[Mr. Henchman was a former pastor of the Congregational church of Lynn]—"and Mr. Lee's was, that the one was dead, and the other was alive. And a living

Digitized by Google

dog is better than a dead lion. So the people would readily welcome an enginery that could infuse life into a system which they had already cherished. Indeed, so well had the ground been prepared for such a one as Jesse Lee, that if there had been no Jesse Lee, the soil would have spontaneously produced one. Then there was no Universalism, or Unitarianism, and little of professional infidelity. Most who were not Calvinists, were Arminians. All irreligion, and much of the apparent religion, sympathized with Arminianism. So Methodism had this advantage, that its doctrines were in favor even with the irreligious. It had affinities of faith with the opposers of vital godliness even while it had so much appearance of vitality. The change which it brought to Lynn was an artificial life infused into a pre-existing body of doctrines. Arminianism used with no more outward forces than are needful to the effect of the truth, is sure eventually to become cold and dead. Yet it is capable of great energy when set in the Methodist system, employed as a galvanic apparatus to give it seeming life. So Romanism is a most energetic system in its way. That, too, has its basis in the Arminian doctrines. It, like Methodism, denies the doctrines of election, of efficacious grace, of perseverance. And it inculcates the existence of sinless perfection, and even more, of works of supererogation; that is, becoming more than perfect. And with these Methodist doctrines, Romanism has wrought with fearful power. But the power lay especially in a machinery so well fitted to the doctrines. These doctrines are nowhere found to have a vitality in themselves, or in the Holy Ghost, which gives a power to the simple preaching of them. They need the bellows to raise the flame, which expires as soon as the bellows rests. Where Arminianism is simply preached, and no more enforced by machinery than gospel truth is required to be enforced, it is powerless. Yet, when set in the system of Romanism, addressing with superhuman dexterity so many

Digitized by Google

principles and passions of depraved nature, it has made the world to tremble before it. But a power that is imparted by machinery cannot be the power of God unto salvation. The faith of believers does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. So, invariably, Arminianism, whenever it has gone unsupported by the Methodist economy, or the Romish economy, or something like it, has put into the sleep of death every considerable branch of the church that has adopted it. The modern development of it, under the auspices of Arminius himself, appropriated to itself what was at a time the preponderant power of the church in Holland; and now the Dutch Remonstrants in all the Netherlands have dwindled to the compass of four thousand people. In France and Switzerland, the stealthy infusion of this doctrine brought the once Calvinistic churches to the brink of the grave. In England, the Presbyterian church came to its death by it. In Scotland, Moderatism, another name for Arminianism, went far enough to show that it was working only death. In Massachusetts, it rocked the cradle of infant Unitarianism in a hundred churches. For all these churches abandoned Calvinism and became Arminians before they became Unitarians. In truth, there was here no apostasy from Calvinism to Unitarianism. But it was in all cases the natural transition from Arminianism to Unitarianism.

"These historical facts illustrate the incompetency of Arminianism, or of the Methodist doctrines, to supply the energies of a religious body without artificial and unscriptural appliances, such as Methodism has. This of itself shows those doctrines to be fundamentally wrong, and not, like the gospel truth, the proper channels of divine life. Doctrines that cannot preserve church life by the preaching and ordinances which God has appointed, without the aid of a galvanic battery, are not the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth forever. But do not Calvinistic churches die out?

Digitized by Google

That is the question. Do they? Do churches *while Calvinistic* die out? Single branches, from local causes, here and there may die from a tree that has living root and stock; but where did the main body of any community of Calvinistic churches die out before they had lost their Calvinism? And very rarely did any go away from Calvinism but through the Arminian road. There have, as we have already seen, been many instances in which churches have first migrated into different regions of doctrines, and then have sickened and died. And the adoption of simple Arminianism by a church has, in the light of all history, been shown to be the first stage of a consumption on its vitals. This approach to death has come for want of the quickening force of the doctrines of the cross. The church is sanctified through the truth. Cut off from the truth, no human art can prolong its life.

"'But great success has attended Methodism.' True; and still greater success has attended Romanism, and for a like cause. But it is yet to be proved whether it is not, in the preponderant result, success in turning men from the simplicity that is in Christ. But we shall have more of this hereafter. One great difficulty which we have ever felt about it is, that *Methodist teaching seeems to be framed to meet the tastes of depraved minds; that Methodism* HAS ITS SUCCESS *more in that it can preach* WHAT THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS WISH TO HEAR *than in anything else. It labors* NOT *to bring men* UP TO RELIGION, *but* TO BRING RELIGION DOWN TO THE DEPRAVED INCLINATIONS OF MEN." [1]

The language of this quotation is certainly very plain and not to be misunderstood; it makes a total condemnation of the theology of Methodism, referring its great success entirely to its machinery, which, by inference, would seem to be considered good; but in the second volume, at the very end of

[1] Cook's Centuries, vol. i., pp. 252–258.

Digitized by Google

it, where the author sums up the substance of his opinions, the machinery of Methodism is also very heartily condemned: "Some may shrink," says the writer, "from the conclusion to which the facts and reasonings of this book would conduct them, in the thought that a system that produces so many good results, and holds in connection with it so many good men, cannot be a bad system. It has been no purpose of mine to maintain a denial that Methodism has done any good, or that many of the Methodists are the real regenerate children of God. I cheerfully grant all that any fair and discriminating witness would testify on that score. And having done that, my ground is broad enough to sustain the conclusion that the *system*, as a system, is *bad*—that its *results* contain more of *evil* than good—that its *ministrations* are *more* of *death* than of life—*that it is one of the great* HINDRANCES *to the purity and progress of religion*, WHICH MUST BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY!"[10]

It ought to be distinctly observed, that the foregoing estimates of Methodism are not to be regarded as the opinions of individual writers, but of whole classes of individuals, whose views were thus representatively expressed. The works written in opposition to Methodism, in England and the United States, are to be counted by the hundred; a catalogue of three hundred and eighty-four of such publications was printed in Philadelphia in 1846; and the treatises, tracts, and articles on this side are entirely beyond all means of computation. I have made use only of those which are to be considered, not as individual authorities, but as the representatives of large communities of men, and of the leading religious communities since the rise of Methodism to the

[10] Cook's Centuries, vol. ii., p. 297. This second volume bears a very significant title: Second Part of Cook's Centuries, Being a Defence and Confirmation of the First, showing that Methodism is not a Branch of the Church of Christ!

Digitized by Google

current time. Toplady represents to us the opinion of the English and American Calvinists of his day; Priestley represents the philosophers and savans of a succeeding period; and in the productions of Sidney Smith we see what the literary circles of Great Britain, and in fact of Europe, at the beginning of the present century, thought of Methodism. In the same way, Dr. Cooke, though not to be compared with the humblest of these opponents of Methodism for personal position or intellectual strength, is the representative, in his estimate of Wesleyanism, of New England Congregationalism. He is himself a leading clergyman of that denomination, holding many of its highest official trusts; he is the editor of one of their most popular weekly sheets; and his first volume, at least, as is learned from his own statements, was not only approved by many of their denominational newspapers, but by a large number of their chief ministers and theological professors. There is another fact in proof of the representative character of Dr. Cooke's work. Not only did it come from the press, and go into circulation in New England, without the censure of any denominational periodical, and with the approbation of not a few, but the General Conference of the State of Maine declined to express an adverse opinion of it, or any opinion at all, when requested officially, by a conference of American Methodism, to say whether Dr. Cooke was or was not correct in arraying among its friends some fifteen or twenty of the leading Congregational clergymen of that State, and many of the first ministers of that denomination throughout the country. Their refusal gives sanction to the claim of representation, otherwise pretty well established, as asserted for this production by its author; we have before us, therefore, a chain of adverse judgments of Methodism, running from the days of its origin to the present moment; and we perceive that the Wesleyan Movement has been regarded, by those hostile to

Digitized by Google

it, either as simple *fanaticism*, or downright *wickedness*, from the hour in which it received existence![11]

II. It must not be supposed, from the examples of Toplady,

[11] Dr. Wise (Popular Objections to Methodism Answered) has published a reply to these volumes of Dr. Cooke; but the best answer is to be found in the statements of the work itself. Read closely, and reduced to a syllogistic form, the work stands as follows: First, Congregationalism, which was established in Lynn in 1632, and which had the advantage of embracing and controlling the entire population of the place, ran a long career of orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and corruption, till, in the year 1783, it gave full proof of its results by almost a total wreck, not only of godliness, but of morality and decency, as evinced in the fact of their extending a call, in that year, to the Rev. Obadiah Parsons, an irreligious and very convivial character, the church and congregation well knowing at the time that this Mr. Parsons was also an adulterer, he having just been tried for adultery in a neighboring parish, and as evinced in another striking fact, that the number of citizens in town making any pretensions to personal religion had dwindled down from hundreds, if not thousands, to just fourteen individuals. This is the *minor premiss* of this work. Secondly, the *major premiss* is, that the religious and moral character of the Congregational church of Lynn, within the period specified, during which there was nothing but Calvinism in this portion of the United States, was a fair example, excepting as to the matter of open unchastity, but inclusive of any amount of worldliness and want of piety, of the religious and moral character of Congregationalism generally in New England. *Therefore*, thirdly, the sage conclusion is, that Methodism, which was not known in Lynn, nor in any part of the New England States, till the year 1790, seven entire years *after* the full maturity of every element of corruption in that Calvinistic city, when all the sad fruits of an exclusive Congregationalism had fully ripened, and even rotted on the soil that bore them, must be held responsible for their production, and for the production of all the existing vices of every other place in Congregational New England, and in all the world, where it has *since* become (without eradicating every evil) the leading denomination. Such is the argument of Dr. Cooke's two volumes; and he is entirely welcome, without any answer here, to all he can gain by the circulation of such a publication. The only fear is, not that his *logic* will be received, but that his *facts* will not be generally acknowledged, as they ought to be, by those for whose benefit the book was written!

Digitized by Google

Hill, Priestley, Smith, and Cooke, that all the Calvinists of Great Britain, or that all the higher gentry of the realm, or that all the philosophers of the kingdom, or that all the wits and literary characters of the mother country, or that all of the Puritans of New England, have been, from the beginning, arrayed against the advance of Methodism. Toplady was openly discountenanced by not a few of the party in whose behalf he wrote. Sir Richard Hill found his influence to be more than matched, without the request or interference of Mr. Wesley, by other persons in high life, who stepped forward to defend the character, if not the designs, of the great Founder. The disapprobation of Priestley was met by the approbation and good wishes of Doctor Franklin. The bitterness of Sidney Smith was at once tempered, if not counteracted, by the genius of Robert Southey; and as to Dr. Cooke, he stands on his "bad eminence" almost alone, so far as existing and open assaults upon Methodism are concerned. He would have us think, it is true, that, beneath all this superficial respect for Methodism in this country exhibited by the clergymen of his denomination, there is but little else than a secret hostility and settled determination to oppose it to the last. This may be so; but it is certain, that, for the last forty years, the writers of that order have published but little against the morality or the aims of Methodism; while very many of them have manifested such an appearance of good feeling as left little, if any thing, to desire in that respect. The truth of it is, in fact, that Methodism has always had its strong friends in every rank of society, in England and in America, and among all classes and denominations. Mr. Wesley and his adherents, on both sides of the Atlantic, have always pursued the policy of going right along with their work, quite regardless of the clamors raised about them by parties whom they could not expect to be their friends; and the result has justified, most abundantly, the wisdom of their course. Their outside

Digitized by Google

friends, more and more convinced of the singleness of their purpose, gradually multiplied as the movement went forward; and Mr. Wesley had not long been dead, before a reaction began to show itself among those very classes of the English and American population, which had been most severe in their opposition.

In looking for the origin of this reaction, it may seem strange to some, that it should begin, as it certainly did, among the literary men of England. There is nothing singular, however, in this fact. Mr. Wesley had been himself a literary man; every member of his father's family, his father himself included, were known as literary characters; they had been pioneers in more than one department of literature and expert in all; and the literati of Great Britain began to feel, that, in taking some part in behalf of the real character of Mr. Wesley, and of the character and tendencies of his work, they were only doing justice to an elder brother of their own household. Besides, literary men are of all the world the least inclined to religious bigotry; their studies are calculated to make them liberal; their work is confined to no narrow or single schemes, but embraces everything useful and interesting to humanity; they are led to overlook the little party feuds of ordinary people, and the still smaller but wickeder zeal of sects, ranging as they do over the entire expanse of the intellectual and material universe; and they thus acquire and fix the habit of being just, and even generous, to the honest endeavors of all honorable and earnest men. It was entirely natural, therefore, that Methodism, the life-work of an Oxford scholar, should find the first reaction in its favor, after the long era of popular and sectarian persecution through which it had made its way, in the literary circles of Great Britain; but I confess it is a fact not altogether to have been expected, that the first writer of any note, who undertook to give a correct idea of the Wesleyan reformation, was one of the ablest of the contributors to that

Digitized by Google

very magazine, which, from 1800 to 1810, poured out the vials of its wrath upon the head of the then sainted Wesley.

Robert Southey, the writer here referred to, so far as I have ever been able to see, intended to do even-handed justice to the great enterprise of Mr. Wesley; and his failures to do so proceeded, not from his design, but from his education. With the exception of his literary taste, which allied him to Wesley by a strong tie of secret sympathy, he was totally unfit for the self-imposed task of giving a true estimate of Methodism. In early life, he had been a rank Socinian; subsequently, and not without giving occasion to the charge of being mercenary in his religious movements, he suddenly became a member of the Church of England; and, as is not uncommon with converts, he not only abjured all laxity of faith, but took his position on the extreme right of the High Church party. He was also equally unsuited to his work by his political experience and connections. In his youthful days, he and several others of his age and rank wrote incessantly against all monarchical government; they maintained that constitutions were an unjust fetter on the liberties of the people; and they proceeded to say, that society could never be what the Creator intended, unless the mass of the population of a country could resolve and act, at any moment, precisely according to their existing impulse, without the fear of precedents or the shackles of established regulations. In a word, Southey began the world as a red-republican of the school of the French Illuminati; and his whole early manhood had been stained with these wretchedly loose principles. Now, however, at the time of writing his celebrated Life of Wesley, soon after the appearance of the articles in the Edinburgh Review, by Sidney Smith, he had not only abandoned all the convictions of his youth, and left far behind him all respect for the doctrines and institutions of popular liberty, but had leaped into the place and attitude of a leader of the English Tories. In spite of these lofty

Digitized by Google

vaultings, however, there was much of the red-republican and still more of the Socinian yet clinging to him. He was a combination of religious and political contradictions, sometimes wounding his new friends by a High Church Toryism entirely too arrogant even for their digestion; at other times damaging their cause by venting some Socinian heresy, or an unlucky relic of his Wat Tyler politics, which seemed to have stuck to him after all his sudden and perilous saltations. There can be gathered, indeed, from the pages of his Life of Wesley, specimens of his opinions of every shade ever professed or adopted by him; and the work, as pointed out by his brother-in-law and friend, Coleridge, is but a book of contradictions. How could a man of his education, indeed, write a reliable life of the founder of Methodism? Wesley was a Low Churchman; he a High Churchman of the boldest front. Wesley had always been moderate, constitutional, loyal in his political opinions; he had been never moderate, but either extremely liberal, even to licentiousness, or extremely rigid, to the last verge of autocracy. The convictions of Wesley had taken hold of his conscience and held possession of the deepest recesses of his nature. Southey was only intellectual; his religion was only his opinion; his principles were his judgment; and he could maintain or abandon either, or anything, as he saw it to be tributary, or not tributary, to his personal advantage. Consequently, he beheld nothing deeper in a man, or in human nature, than selfishness; and the glory of human life was nothing better than a prosperous ambition. With such a vision he looked upon the life and character of John Wesley. He made him a personage of good mind, finished education, and blameless moral purposes, but moved to his remarkable career of suffering and of labor by no impulse but a sort of half-justifiable ambition. He sometimes calls him fanatical; but his most customary word of censure is enthusiasm. Sidney Smith's *fanatic* had become Robert Southey's enthusiast. In gene-

Digitized by Google

ral, Wesley's doctrines were thought to be right enough; his course of life could be easily accounted for and made consistent; but his convictions were too profound, too fundamental, taking too rank a hold of the elements of his nature. His religion, in a word, was about orthodox, only there was too much of it. Life and death, heaven and hell, were not intellectual speculations, but revealed realities; and Wesley had not spent his days in dignified retirement, or in the elegant labors of a regular parish, but had gone out, single-handed and alone at first, to say to the thousands flocking to hear him, that every man of them was on trial for the joys or sorrows of eternity. He might believe the thirty-nine articles; he might believe the most fearful declarations of the New Testament; but he need not make so much ado about such matters. He did make the ado; he took his Maker at his word; and he had gone up and down through the realm, though shut off from every worldly honor, and pursued by persecution, urging men to make full preparation for the life to come by following the guidance of that volume which God had given us as the lamp to be carried by a race of immortals on a journey to a world of everlasting habitations. Wesley and his followers were, therefore, "enthusiastic;" they were "extravagant;" they did not believe too much; but they believed, and felt, and consequently acted, with too much strength and fervor. On the whole, however, there was more good than evil, not only in Wesley, but in Methodism; and Robert Southey was the first man of his rank in England to make this liberal concession. Indeed, had the Wesleyan movement stood firm to the Church of England, even against her own opposition and repulses, Wesley and his work would have been, in the eyes of this Tory and High Churchman, worthy of the admiration of all ages:

"Such was the life," says Southey, on the last page of his production, "and such the labors of John Wesley,

Digitized by Google

a man of great views, great energy, and great virtues. That he awakened a zealous spirit, not only in his own community, but in a church which needed something to quicken it, is acknowledged by the members of that church itself; that he encouraged enthusiasm and extravagance, lent a ready ear to false and impossible relations, and spread superstition as well as piety, would hardly be denied by the candid and judicious among his own people. In its immediate effects, the powerful principle of religion which he and his preachers diffused, has reclaimed many from a course of sin, has supported many in poverty, sickness, and affliction, and has imparted to many a triumphant joy in death.

"What Wesley says of the miracles, wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, may fitly be applied here: 'In many of these instances, I see great superstition, as well as strong faith; but God makes allowance for invincible ignorance, and blesses the faith, notwithstanding the superstition.' Concerning the general and remoter consequences of Methodism, opinions will differ. They who consider the wide-spreading schism to which it has led, and who know that the welfare of the country is vitally connected with its church establishment, may think that the evil overbalances the good. But the good may endure, and the evil be only for a time. In every other sect, there is an inherent hostility to the Church of England, too often and too naturally connected with diseased political opinions. So it was in the beginning, and so it will continue to be, as long as those sects endure. But Methodism is free from this. The extravagances which accompanied its growth are no longer encouraged, and will altogether be discountenanced, as their real nature is understood. This cannot be doubted. It is in the natural course of things that it should purify itself gradually from whatever is objectionable in its institutions. Nor is it beyond the bounds of reasonable hope, that, conforming itself to the original intentions of its founders, it may again draw toward

Digitized by Google

the establishment from which it has seceded, and deserve to be recognized as an auxiliary institution, its ministers being analogous to the regulars, and its members to the tertiaries and confraternities of the Romish Church. The obstacles to this are surely not insuperable, perhaps not so difficult as they may appear. *And were this effected, John Wesley would then be ranked, not only among the most remarkable and influential men of his age, but among the* GREAT BENEFACTORS OF HIS COUNTRY AND HIS KIND." [12]

This is as favorable a judgment as could have been anticipated from the pen of a High Churchman of Dr. Southey's antecedents; and it ought not to be concealed that, after the first publication of his Life of Wesley, his opinion of his hero underwent an entire revolution in regard to the charge of personal ambition. His work fell into the hands of Alexander Knox, Esq., a gentleman in every way equal to Dr. Southey for intellectual ability and social standing, who, in two communications written at Southey's request, convinced him of his error in attributing to Mr. Wesley any but the purest and most exalted motives. "Alexander Knox has convinced me," says Southey, in a letter to James Nichols, Esq., "that I was mistaken in supposing ambition entered largely into Mr. Wesley's actuating impulses. Upon the subject, he wrote a long and most admirable paper, and gave me permission to affix it to my own work, whenever it might be reprinted. This I shall do, and make such alterations in the book as are required in consequence." Mr. Knox was

[12] Southey's Life of Wesley, vol. ii. pp. 336, 337. Were it only a part of the Church of England, Methodism, according to the Laureate, would be worthy of the loftiest eulogies; and the reader will at once conclude, as Dr. Southey should have seen, that, in character and qualities, it is just what it would be if connected with the English establishment, neither better nor worse. The final estimate of this writer, therefore, of English and American Methodism, was certainly better than could have been expected from such a quarter.

Digitized by Google

entirely worthy of this regard as a witness in relation to Wesley and his movement. In early life, he had been a member of a Wesleyan society in England, but had seceded in later years, and gone into the Church of England. "Having a growing disposition to think for myself," he says, "I could not adopt the opinions which were current among his followers; and, before I was twenty years of age, my relish for their religious practices had abated." The judgment of Mr. Knox, therefore, must be taken as that of a Methodist seceder, but of a gentleman of the highest cultivation and position, who, notwithstanding his early prejudices against Methodism, and his existing prejudices as a warm and consistent churchman, intended to speak exactly according to his convictions. His testimony, in fact, is of the very highest order, not second, indeed, to that of Dr. Southey; for he had known Mr. Wesley familiarly from his own boyhood; and such had been Mr. Wesley's respect for him in return, in spite of their ecclesiastical separation, that he had always made Mr. Knox's residence his home, to the last year of his life, whenever his peregrinations over Great Britain had brought him to his neighborhood. Behold, then, what a picture of the man of God is held up in the first of the two papers of Knox as submitted to Dr. Southey! The learned biographer, giving too much credence to the low slanders referred to in the first division of this chapter, had left upon his pages several dark insinuations respecting the moral purity of Mr. Wesley. See how these insinuations vanish before the testimony of a person who knew him, but who had no temptation to over-estimate his character! "The truth is," says Knox, "that John Wesley considered the excellency of Christianity to consist in its delivering the human spirit from the dominion and the pollution of moral evil; and thus qualifying and disposing it for the moral enjoyment of God. This central principle of Christian philosophy he embraced for himself, and urged upon others, as

Digitized by Google

essentially and infinitely the *one thing needful*. His moral creed was comprehended in that weightiest and most profound oracle: 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.' St. Augustine's pregnant aphorism—'*Fecisti nos tibi, et cor semper irrequietum, donec requiescat in te*'—was adopted by him in all its fullness; nor do the winged words of St. Chrysostom express this supreme truth with deeper feeling, or more strongly attest the pious ardor of him who uttered them, than passages of frequent recurrence in Mr. Wesley's later sermons.

"It is this moral radiance, that so often breaks forth in Mr. Wesley's writings, which could alone compensate an unprejudiced reader for the shallow reasonings and unsupported conclusions"—it is the churchman that is now speaking—"into which his natural temperament, his favorite theories, and his peculiar circumstances, conspired to betray him. Still, in spite of these repulsive features, I must confess for myself that I feel inexpressible satisfaction in recurring to those warm and bright effusions of moral taste and spiritual affection. But I could not do so, if my recollections of John Wesley himself were not in complete accordance with the pure practice which he inculcates, and the 'holy loftiness of heart' (to use an expression of Archbishop Leighton) which he is ever solicitous to inspire.

"I am well aware that the history of what is called the religious world leaves little room for concluding that eminently zealous men must *therefore* be immaculate. Yet, even had I no personal knowledge of Mr. Wesley's character, the practical principles to which I have been adverting would, to my mind, raise him far above the reach of any discreditable suspicion. It is in religionists of another cast that moral inconsistencies have shown themselves. A faith that does not regard everlasting safety as vitally depending on present purity, though in general its practice may be much better than its theory, is little likely to lay the ax to the root of

Digitized by Google

human corruption, and may not always be sufficiently on the alert to repel and subdue the first motions of moral evil. But that one, whose entire principles indispensably bound him to pursue purity of heart and life, and made the substantive possession of that purity essential to his daily and hourly comfort—that such a one, I say, after years of devotedness, and in the midst of what might be called a life of sacrifice, should, in one particular instance, depart wickedly from his course, and, on one single occasion, give the lie to all the other actions of his life, all the words of his mouth, and all the vivid issues of his ever-profluent heart, would be against all example, and beyond all credibility. I rest assured that any such moral anomaly would be sought for in vain in the annals of the Christian world.

"But something much stronger than any general argument settles my conviction of John Wesley's perfect integrity: I mean the tranquil and satisfied mind with which I saw him resign himself to the rapid sinking of his frame, and the certain approach of his dissolution. Mr. Southey has remarked, with his usual discernment and good feeling, on the evidences of this fact which have come before him. Had he personally witnessed what he so justly conceived, he would have needed no additional proof that Mr. Wesley enjoyed as cloudless a mental retrospect as could consist with mortality.

"I had an opportunity of closely observing him, for some days together, in the last year but one of his life. He was, just then, after a wonderful continuance of natural strength, beginning to 'find that he grew old.' His sight was much decayed, and he himself was conscious that his memory was weakened, though it did not yet appear in his conversation. Of his own actual feelings under these increasing infirmities, I have an interesting record, in a letter dated Dublin, April 11th, 1789, written soon after his last arrival in Ireland, and notifying his intended visit to the place where I resided, and where he was to be my guest. 'You see in the public papers,'

Digitized by Google

he says, 'that I shall be with you, if God permit, on the 30th of next month. If I should be called to a longer journey before that time, I hope you will be able to say, "Good is the will of the Lord." Every time we meet, it is less and less probable that we should meet again in this world; but it is enough if we are counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead.'

"After receiving such an intimation of conscious decline, I was delighted to find his cheerfulness in no respect abated. It was too obvious that his bodily frame was sinking; but his spirit was as alert as ever; and he was little less the life of the company he happened to be in, than he had been three and twenty years before, when I first knew him. I had some motive at that time for stating, in a newspaper publication, the impression which his manner and conversation then particularly made upon me. This sketch of Mr. Wesley, Mr. Henry Moore, his first biographer, inserted, with the alteration of one unimportant word, in his volume; and it was copied both by Mr. Hampson and Dr. Whitehead. Of what I then said, I do not, after the reflection of so many years, retract an iota. Now, as then, I feel it to be a case in which there was no room for delusion. Such unclouded sunshine of the breast, in the deepest winter of age, and on the felt verge of eternity, bespoke a mind whose recollections were as unsullied as its present sensations were serene. It seemed to verify to the letter those weighty words of the Psalmist: '*Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last.*'"

In repelling, in behalf of Mr. Wesley, the charge of fanaticism, as he had just done that of ambition, Mr. Knox describes and sanctions the character of Methodism itself:

"Another charge against Mr. Wesley," he says, in his second paper, "I cannot equally dispute, namely, that of enthusiasm. Still, he was an enthusiast of no vulgar kind. As Nelson was an enthusiast for his country, so was John Wesley for religion.

Digitized by Google

Where the highest interests of man were concerned, Mr. Wesley made no account of precedent, or maxims of human or even ecclesiastical prudence. The Church of England appeared to him to have fallen into a state of stupor like that of the ancient Jewish Church; and it was his persuasion that a kind of second John the Baptist, a 'voice of one crying in the wilderness,' was necessary to awaken it: to this duty he conceived himself providentially called, and he engaged in it with as firm a purpose, as if he had been commissioned by a voice from heaven. But in this material respect John Wesley differed from all vulgar enthusiasts—that he did not imagine any such voice, nor had he the slightest thought of either impulse or intimation from above. Singular as his course was, he no more supposed himself raised above the guidance of his reason than of his conscience; but the premises from which he reasoned frequently derived so much of their shape and color from the abstracted view which he took of them, and the sanguine spirit in which he regarded them, as to produce results differing perhaps little, in appearance, from those of strict and proper fanaticism; while, in reality, they were only the regular workings of his peculiarly formed and, at the same time, religiously devoted mind."

In regard to the character of Methodism, however, as distinct from that of its founder, Mr. Knox bears the most direct and ample testimony; and his testimony is the more valuable, because, when giving it, he could compare the religious condition of Great Britain after and before the establishment of the Wesleyan movement:

"I would here take the liberty of observing, that there is nothing in Mr. Southey's work which has interested me more than the view which he appears to me to take of God's providential government; and I have read with sincere pleasure, in a very recent publication, the strong avowal of his 'persuasion, that all things upon the great scale have tended to

Digitized by Google

the general good, and *the development of the great scheme of Providence.*' The frequent application of this principle to Mr. Wesley's commencement and career, has always gratified and sometimes surprised me; I mean, because I found in some instances such a concurrence with preconceptions of my own. The necessity which Mr. Southey has so luminously shown (in his ninth chapter) for some interposition of Providence to resuscitate the practical sense of religion in the English mind, at the period when Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield began to sound their alarm, has always appeared to me to invest the phenomenon of Methodism with a character wholly remote from contingency. I must not now, however, digress into the particular line of thought to which I have been led respecting such movements; but I confess I have been disposed to conclude, not merely that Wesley and Whitefield were raised to supply a defect for which the Church of England had not provided, but rather to serve a purpose to which such an establishment as ours was perfectly inadequate.

"The strict canonical *order* of our Church, which at once furnishes aliment for the most advanced piety, and preserves that piety, however elevated, from every alloy of fanaticism, afforded no proportional means of awaking an entire people from a moral sleep, which was *consanguineus lethi.* Had even any number of the established clergy felt the exigence of the case, and set themselves to remedy it by their exertions, the effect at best would have been local, and most probably transient; while, perhaps, the regularity of the Church might have been disturbed, and its spirit, if not vitiated, at least diluted, by the adoption of measures which honest zeal might have inspired, and without which it might have been, perhaps justly, thought that little or nothing was to be accomplished.

"An agency, therefore, was called forth, which might go every length that was thought expedient, without blemishing

Digitized by Google

the character of the Established Church, or deranging its machinery. And the two extraordinary persons who were to serve this providential purpose seemed so selected, that their exertions, jointly and severally, might be sufficient to diffuse a new religious feeling through the multitude, and to effect, *eventually*, a kind of moral revolution in the most intelligent and enlightened of nations. I do not now rate the work which has been done by its intrinsic qualities (the crudeness of which might be fitted for an immature state of the public mind), but by its magnitude, and by the contrast *now* apparent with that prevalent indifference to religion which I myself remember."

This distinguished witness is equally able and emphatic in his general approval of the *doctrines* of the Wesleyan body. Speaking of Mr. Wesley's works, which, as is well understood, are the standards of Methodist doctrine on both sides of the Atlantic, he says:

"The consequence has been, that, by whatever imperfections or hallucinations his writings may be blemished, the most genuine elements of pure and undefiled religion are to be found in them, not only in an easily separable form, but, as it has appeared to me, when separated and systematized, possessing a consistency and plenitude of practical Christian truth, not, as far as I know, equally furnished by any modern writer. The same principles, I confess, have been repeatedly maintained. They are (as I have intimated above, and more than once ventured to assert), in substance, those of our most celebrated Church-of-England divines. But in these latter there is generally some questionable admixture, which either obscures the brightness or abates the energy of the truths which they are solicitous to maintain. If the dogmas are ever so completely rejected, there is seldom an equal exception from the opposite excesses of Pelagius in earlier, or of Episcopius in later times. It would appear, perhaps, to have been reserved for John Wesley to draw a strictly

Digitized by Google

definitive line between the one class of misconceptions and the other."

Mr. Knox attributes the remarkable success of Methodism, throughout the world, to the personal character of Mr. Wesley, to the doctrinal position of his movement, and to its irresistible moral power among the masses of the world's population.[18]

Such is the testimony of a very able man, and a member of the Church of England, who had every opportunity of knowing the daily life of Mr. Wesley, and of comprehending the character of his mission. But I must produce, from the same denomination, a single other witness; and it shall be, like all I have offered, of no common order. It shall be no less a personage than the well-known Isaac Taylor, a philosopher of world-wide reputation, and an author who has devoted his ripest years to the investigation and treatment of religious subjects. Mr. Taylor has written a work on the character of Wesley and his movement; and though he does not find either of them perfect, and says much that proves the prejudices of his religious education, his volume abounds with the most ample acknowledgments of the great value to be set upon the Wesleyan reformation. He wonders how such a man as Dr. Southey could have beheld anything like ambition, or the love of power, or similar vice in the open life of Mr. Wesley:

"No mind and heart," he says, "that has ever attracted the eyes of mankind, is more thoroughly transparent than

[18] Appendix to Southey's Life of Wesley, vol ii., pp. 339–410. No man ought to read this Life of Wesley without paying particular attention to these two documents of Mr. Knox. They were acknowledged by Dr. Southey himself as having radically modified his views of Wesley and of Methodism; and they certainly neutralize every unfriendly criticism of the biographer, leaving his work the best biography of the Founder of Methodism in our language. Without the Knox papers, however, it is the most false and injurious. The best edition of this life is that of Dr. Curry.

Digitized by Google

Wesley's. How is it, then, that, like Loyola's, it can have furnished a problem? To read his journals and letters, or his sermons and polemical writings, is to come into the presence, not merely of a master-spirit, and of one who stands unmatched in energy, constancy, consistency, but of a man who was too guileless to think of saving himself from the imputation of inconsistency, and far too fervently intent upon an object beyond himself to entertain any care about that resemblance of egotism, or of ambition, which the pursuit of that object could not fail to impart to his mode of acting —acting as he did, as the founder, proprietor, and administrator of a society so widely extended. Why is it, then, that, among those who would wish to be thought his apologists (though not his disciples), he has been so spoken of as if some mystery overshadowed that bright head, or as if that countenance, beaming, as it does, with child-like love, was the covering of an abyss? It has so happened because the character and the course of Wesley, as of his colleagues, involves a far deeper problem than that of the individual dispositions and motives of the man. The Gospel—understood and bowed to in all its depth and height of meaning—furnishes the only possible means of clearing up the perplexities that attach to the motives and conduct of those who from it have received their impulse, and who have walked according to its rule. Wesley perplexes those only who, if they would confess the fact, are still more perplexed by Christianity itself." [14]

After meeting and removing the criticisms of Southey and his annotator, S. T. Coleridge, Mr. Taylor proceeds to make a still more emphatic reference to the character of Methodism and of its great founder:

"If he had moved in a private sphere," he says, speaking of Wesley, "that for instance of a parish priest, Wesley's

[14] Taylor's Wesley and Methodism, pp. 86, 87.

Digitized by Google

flock would not have known that their minister had so much as one fault; and the admiration and love of his intimate friends would only have been a more emphatic expression of the feeling which would have pervaded the little world whose happiness it was to live within sight and hearing of him. His was a personal virtue that was not merely unblemished, for it was luminously bright. His countenance shone with goodness, truth, purity, benevolence; a sanctity belonged to him, which those near him felt, as if it were a power with which the atmosphere was fraught." Further on the writer adds: "John Wesley—as to his intellect, and as to his views—had his faults and his infirmities: grant it; but we should not have known so much as this, if, what was individual in him, had not repeated itself and become a feature of a community that now fills half the world. When thus magnified, each ruggedness or want of finish on the surface of his mind, who cannot see it? as to this or that misadjustment of the intellectual mechanism, who may not point the finger at it? These things were of the man; but his virtues were God's own work, perfectly finished—and how well they look, although the bright spectrum has spread itself out to a diameter as wide as the empire on which the sun never sets! It was Wesley's virtues and piety that gave form and tone to his teachings; and his teaching has embodied itself in the Christianlike behavior of tens of thousands of his people, on both sides of the Atlantic."[15] Mr. Taylor elsewhere says that "Wesley's glory was, as one may say, an effulgence of Christianity itself," and in another place exclaims: "Wesley, apostolic man as he was, and having a heart and a countenance warm and bright as the sun with genuine benevolence—an unselfish, loving soul, a soul large enough to fill a seraph's bosom!"

Of the influence of Methodism upon society at large, and

[15] Wesley and Methodism, pp. 89–90.

Digitized by Google

particularly upon the Christian denominations, Mr. Taylor makes ample record:

"The Episcopal Church," he says, "owes to Methodism, in great part, the modern revival of its energies;" and he makes the same declaration in relation to all the other orders of evangelical Christians: "The Wesleys furnish a notable illustration of this principle. Great innovators, indeed, they were; but anarchists they were not. Themselves bred within a strict ecclesiastical inclosure, and firm in their attachment to its principles and practices, and far from indifferent to the prerogatives which personally they thence derived, and by temper also abhorrent of schisms, and inclined to defer to authority, they were doubly and trebly guarded against the temptation to violate rules and usages at the impulse of mere self-will or caprice. Nevertheless, these were the men who, in fact, and before they had advanced far on their path, found themselves compelled with their own hands to snap asunder, as well the staff 'beauty,' as the staff 'bands;' and they rent, not a church they denounced, but the very church they sincerely loved and fondly clung to. And how wide is the rent which was then made! for the Methodistic schism has not merely drawn off certain classes of the community from the Episcopal Church, but by the new life it diffused on all sides itself, it has *preserved from extinction and has reanimated the languishing nonconformity of the last century, which, just at the time of the Methodistic revival, was rapidly in course to be found nowhere but in books.*"[16]

But the philosopher cannot satisfy his admiration of the substance of what he looked upon as Methodism without a still more distinct eulogium:

"We cannot allow Methodism," he says, "to have been a genuine development of the principal elements of Christianity, without admitting it to take a prominent place in that provi-

[16] Wesley and Methodism, pp. 58–59.

Digitized by Google

dential system which embraces all time, and which, from age to age, has, with increasing clearness, been unfolding itself, and becoming cognizable by the human mind. So far as Methodism truly held forth Christianity, it was a signal holding of it forth; for a more marked utterance of the Gospel has occurred only once before in the lapse of eighteen centuries; and that, at the Reformation, was not less disparaged than this by a large admixture of the errors and inconsistencies of its movers and adherents. Christianity, given to the world at once in the ministry and writings of the apostles, has, from the first moment to this, held its onward course under a system of administration inscrutable indeed as a whole, or as to its reasons, and yet not entirely occult. On the contrary, at moments, Heaven's economy has seemed to receive a bright beam, as through a dense cloud, making conspicuous, if not the *motives* of the divine government, yet the fact. The Reformation is held by Protestants to have been such a manifestation of the Providence of God in restoring the Gospel, and in proclaiming it anew among the nations; and thus the events of the sixteenth century brought out to view that which is always *real*, whether visible or not—namely, a divine interposition—maintaining truth in the world, and giving it a fresh expansion from time to time. In perfect analogy with the events of the Reformation were those which attended the rise and progress of Methodism." [17]

Strange as it may sound to some ears to hear of Methodism being placed side by side, and that by one of the most philosophical and enlightened men of modern times, with the Lutheran Reformation, it seems as if the great author could scarcely repeat often enough his high respect for the wonderful work started by the labors of Mr. Wesley. He wonders how any well-informed writer could ever have spoken of it otherwise than with admiration; and he dwells

[17] Wesley and Methodism, p. 21.

Digitized by Google

with evident satisfaction upon the change of public opinion in regard to it since the day when its first preachers were mobbed and persecuted over England:

"During these sixty, or seventy, or eighty years," he observes, "that have slipped by, the absolute number of persons in England, or the *proportion* of such persons, has vastly increased, whose range of view, in matters of religion, has been so much widened, that, in disregard to sectarian restrictions, and even holding in abeyance some notions which they have not discarded, they are more than coldly willing to think and speak of Wesley and of Whitefield as great and good men, and to admit their claim to stand prominent among the benefactors of their country, and the worthies of all time. Concomitant with the increase of this class of liberally-feeling religious persons, upon whose assent and consent a writer may safely rely, there is a proportionate decrease of the number of those who would tolerate or approve of that style of frigid levity—half banter, half admiration, and whole infidelity—which, only thirty years ago, passed as the appropriate mode in which a candid and philosophic writer [he refers to Southey] should deal with Methodism." [18]

The volume of Mr. Taylor is full of this class of eulogies. The author speaks in the highest terms of the talents and virtues of Mr. Wesley, saying of him that he might have attained to any eminence as a statesman, or at the bar, and comparing him with St. Paul for every Christian virtue. He gives due praise to the labors and talents of Mr. Wesley's ministerial assistants. He represents the body of the membership of the Wesleyan Society, in Europe and in America, as pious, devout, active, energetic, and enlightened Christians. Under four heads, he sets down the leading features of the Wesleyan Reformation, ascribing its wonderful success

[18] Wesley and Methodism, pp. 17, 18.

Digitized by Google

to their well-balanced coöperation; and these features he thinks are of the very substance of our heaven-born religion. The first of these elementary features was the rousing of the consciences of mankind to the conviction that the facts of revelation were realities which every man must one day meet:

"Preaching," says the writer, "in ordinary times, produces an effect upon practised congregations analogous, indeed, to the subjects that are at any time brought forward; that is to say, the feeling of the people is in harmony with the feeling and intention of the speaker; and beyond this rippling of the glassy surface, an individual, here and there, is more deeply affected. But, as to the mass, there is no proportion whatever—there is no approach toward a proportionate feeling, as related to the import of the principal facts upon which the preacher insists. The difference, then, between this preacher and the Methodist of the time gone by is of that sort which the instances above adduced illustrate: the one is listened to with assent and approval. Every word of the other is as a shaft that rives the bosom."

The second of these features is equally honorable to the cause established by Mr. Wesley:

"As the first element of that revival, which Methodism so extensively effected," says our witness, "we have thus alleged to be an awakening of the dormant religious consciousness, or innate sense of our relationship to God, the righteous Judge. This religious consciousness, as it goes far beyond the range of that moral sense which regards the obligations of this life, so does it vastly exceed, and much differ from, the feeling which in ordinary times pervades Christianized communities. But then, how deep soever and intense for a time this awakened consciousness may be, there does not necessarily result from it any permanent spiritual renovation of the minds in which it takes place. The tumult of his new sense toward God may wholly subside, and all

Digitized by Google

the anguish and the terror attending it may be allayed, or may be diverted by the return of earthly passions, and the soul may thus relapse, and often does relapse, into slumber. But if not, and if this quickening proceeds, there supervenes a deeper feeling still—a consciousness of the relationship of God, the Father of spirits, to the individual spirit, which is *thus* beginning to live a life divine. This reflex idea is the proper consequence of that which has already taken possession of the soul; and we find in it what we name as the second element of the Methodistic revival."

The third feature is given by this writer in equally glowing colors:

"A vivid consciousness of this salvation, brought constantly under correction and revision by reference to the Bible, and by an oft-renewed appeal to scriptural tests of sincerity, gave a healthy tone to Methodism, for the most part, and long preserved it from subsidence into any of those forms of non-scriptural and sentimental excitement which so often take the place of effective piety. Methodism thus stands contrasted also with that intellectualism to which the genius and eloquence of some few noted preachers and popular writers of more recent times have given currency. Modern congregations, disciplined—under such guidance—in the art and practice of listening to sermons as amateurs, have drawn preachers by their plaudits more and more into this elaborated manner, the purport of which is to pass Christianity through the refining fires of each successive system of sentimental philosophy that attracts ephemeral attention. Methodism knew of no such tastes, no such refinements, and although it proclaimed the Gospel rudely, often, or under partial aspects, or in objectionable phrases, it was not sophisticated Christianity that it published; it was that Biblical Christianity which will never cease to be an amazement, a scorn, an insoluble problem to all, of every class, religiously-minded or otherwise, who have

Digitized by Google

not brought themselves to the point of an unconditional abandonment of notions and speculations that are of the 'earth—earthy.'" [19]

The fourth and concluding feature in this analysis of the essence of Methodism is, according to Mr. Taylor, the oneness of aim, the salvation of sinners, which he takes to be the single object of the Wesleyan revival; and, in this view of the case, he gives the most liberal praise to the heralds of Methodism in all lands. He presents Whitefield as the type of Wesleyan preachers; and yet, he thinks that even he must have had, and did have, in everything but the higher graces of his oratory, many equals:

"Whitefield," he says, "is not thus named as if in disparagement of others of the Methodistic company, among whom some, perhaps, were not at all inferior to him in this respect. This *elementary impulse*, which is the exterior and involuntary expression of *a deeper feeling*, marks the Methodistic era; and it was in various degrees the distinction of this band of men, and it is that which should entitle them to occupy a prominent position in a genuine history of Christianity. On this special ground, where do we find their equals—that is to say, where, within the compass of Christian history, shall we find, not eminent and solitary instances, but a company of men, of untainted orthodoxy, clear of sectarian virulence, indifferent to things indifferent, intent only upon the First Truths—in labors and suffering equal to the most zealous, and *surpassing perhaps all* IN SIMPLICITY OF PURPOSE, as ambassadors for Christ—en-

[19] Wesley and Methodism, p. 169. Mr. Taylor presumes too much in regard to the want of acquaintance, among Methodist clergymen, with the ephemeral philosophies of their day and generation. They know them very well; they read about them, study them even, with a good deal of patience; but then, knowing "a more excellent way," they almost universally condemn them.

Digitized by Google

treating men everywhere, 'in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God?'"[20]

All these features of Methodism our philosopher presents as the reasons of its wonderful expansion; and he proceeds to show that, as a scheme of evangelic aggression, as a system of popular religious discipline or instruction, as a hierarchy, or system of spiritual government, and as an establishment, or body corporate, related to the social state, Methodism has accomplished wonders; but he returns with renewed admiration to the simplicity and oneness of object as the leading cause of its remarkable prosperity.

"*Foremost*," he says, "among the causes to which may be attributed the unexampled success of the Wesleyan body, must be named its *Unity of Intention*, or adherence to or steady pursuit of a great principle. This means something more than a faithful profession of doctrine, or a continuous orthodoxy; for other bodies have had this same merit, and have 'held fast the form of sound words' through centuries of prophesying in sackcloth. But these communities, without an exceptive instance, besides their giving less prominence to that effective truth—'*salvation by faith*'—have either derived their organization from tradition from remote times, and have allowed their energies to be shackled by venerated observances; or, what is worse, have, as we have just said, yielded themselves to the will and whim of theoretic Biblists, and have vegetated, or barely breathed, within the bandages of a church polity according to texts. No man was more observant of the authority of Holy Scripture than Wesley; but his understanding was as practical in its tendencies, as his piety was sincere; and he perfectly felt, whether or not he defined that conviction in words, that an Apostolic Church—although right to a pin—which did not subserve its main purpose—the spread of the Gospel and the

[20] Wesley and Methodism, pp. 181–182.

Digitized by Google

conversion of the ungodly—must be regarded as an absurdity and a hindrance to the truth. 'What is the chaff to the wheat?' What are wholesome and Scriptural *usages* and *orders*, which leave Christianity to die away within an inclosure? Wesley, *not withdrawing his eye for a moment from the great and single purpose of his life*, not letting go his hold of his *one* principle, worked upon such materials as came to his hand, in the spirit of liberty and power. Nothing for mere expediency's sake would he have admitted—nothing would he knowingly have done on the assumption, that the end sanctified the means. But so long as no apostolic injunction is violated, and so long as the spirit and intention of apostolic precedents are regarded, a Christian institution is free (as he thought) to use the natural ability and sagacity which God has given him, for devising a *mechanism*, which, though it may not give contentment to theorists, shall subserve its high purpose of sustaining and spreading the Gospel. Wesleyan Methodism, therefore, whatever may be its deficiences if thought of as a church system, or how grave soever and ominous its faults as a scheme of government, has yet the great and commanding merit of EMBODYING THE EVANGELIC IMPULSE *as its one law and reason:* it is simple in principle; and with the working of that principle, no subordinate purposes are allowed to interfere." [21]

This estimate of Methodism given us by Mr. Taylor, with all critical severity, is too abundant in its eulogies for the compass of a chapter. The author leaves no part of Methodism untouched. There is no element of it, indeed, which he does not praise; and when he had examined the entire scope of its constitution and history, he could not dismiss his theme without looking with a still greater admiration to its future. The past, he thinks, is secure; and he utters his convictions of this fact, after having finished his survey, in the strongest terms:

[21] Wesley and Methodism, pp. 201, 202.

Digitized by Google

"The Methodism of the last century," says he, "even when considered apart from its consequences, must always be thought worthy of the most serious regard. But, in fact, that great religious movement has, immediately or remotely, so given an impulse to Christian feeling and profession, on all sides, that it has come to present itself as the starting-point of our modern religious history. The field-preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, in 1739, was the event whence the religious epoch, now current, must date its commencement. Back to the events of that time must we look, necessarily, as often as we seek to trace to its source what is most characteristic of the present time." [22]

The future, too, he thinks is to be glorified by a Methodism of still higher value, and of greater success, but still a Methodism, and the offspring of Wesley:

"The past Methodism was far from being a message of wrath, proclaimed by men of fierce and fanatical tempers—it was a message of joy, hope, and love; and it made its conquests as such, notwithstanding those bold and unmeasured denunciations against sin which it so often uttered. And so it will be with the future Methodism; and although it will rest itself upon a distinct and laboriously-obtained belief concerning the 'wrath to come'—a belief such as will heave the human mind with a deep convulsive dread—yet, and notwithstanding this preliminary, the renovation which we look for will come in as the splendor of the day comes in the tropics—it will be a sudden brightness that makes all things glad!" [23]

Methodism, in other words, which has outstripped all comparison in its past history, in its future course, according to the prediction of Mr. Taylor, is to usher in the millennium!

These testimonies on the behalf of Methodism from

[22] Wesley and Methodism, Preface.

[23] Wesley and Methodism, p. 290.

Digitized by Google

Church of England witnesses, though taken with a constant view to brevity, have occupied so much space, that I must be less generous of room to those of other denominations; and yet, an intelligent reader would like to have some idea of the manner in which the Presbyterian Establishment of Scotland has treated Methodism. The answer can be given in a few words. To *doctrinal* Methodism, the kirk has always been an open and strenuous opponent; but for the evangelical labors of Wesley, and the religious blessings of his system, it has expressed an undeviating admiration. The Scottish clergymen, contemporary with the rise of the Wesleyan revival, while they turned a cold eye upon its introduction into Scotland as a thing unnecessary, where the Gospel was already administered in its purity, and unorthodox as compared with their cherished Calvinism, were not slow to acknowledge the early Methodists as sincere disciples and promulgators of the true practical religion; the greatest of their immediate successors began to look upon it as a desideratum for England, though scarcely needed among themselves; their very greatest man since the days of their founder, the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, characterized Methodism with remarkable frankness, when he styled it, without equivocation or qualification, as "*Christianity in earnest;*" and the North British Review, the organ of this communion, with occasional criticisms of particular features of the Wesleyan system, has always spoken of it with respect and sometimes with admiration:

"We fear that there are not a few," says that able magazine in a recent issue, speaking of Mr. Taylor's volume, "even of the ministers of Scotland, who scarcely possess so much acquaintance with Methodism as Mr. Taylor's work assumes, and who, on this account, are but imperfectly qualified to appreciate and relish it. We would esteem it one beneficial result of its publication, if it should lead many in Scotland to resolve on acquiring a fuller knowledge of *one*

Digitized by Google

of the most interesting and important religious movements, which the history of the Church presents to our contemplation." [24]

The same work contains the following similar reference to Methodism in another place: "We have the highest respect for the piety, the wisdom and the ability of the venerable men who, in our day, have chiefly regulated the administration of the affairs of Methodism. Their successors will have a difficult part to act. We earnestly hope they will be wise men, 'who know the time and what Israel ought to do." [25]

This organ of Scottish Presbyterianism, however, gives a still warmer and heartier approval to the general good character and usefulness of Methodism. Knowing all that Mr. Taylor has said in its eulogy, with his glowing eulogiums, indeed, spread out before it, it finds no fault with him for inditing such panegyrics, but covers him and his volume with a marked but just laudation:

"We do not," says the magazine, "any more than the other literary organs of public opinion, concur in all Mr. Taylor's views; but we have no hesitation in expressing our conviction, that *there is no living author who has brought so fine a combination of distinguished talents and extensive acquiriments to bear upon the inculcation of important principles*—principles which it *greatly concerns the churches of Christ*, and all who have any influence in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, *to understand and to ponder*." [26]

It must be looked upon as a very notable fact, indeed, that, in the place of the sarcasm and slander of an earlier period, the literary journals of Great Britain and of the United States have fallen into the habit of pronouncing eulogies upon Methodism. There is the London Quarterly Review, in fact, not only High Church ecclesiastically but

[24] North British Review, vol. iv. p. 269, A.D. 1852.

[25] North British Review, vol. xvi. p. 285,

[26] North British Review, vol. xvi. p. 269.

Digitized by Google

Tory in its politics, and both to the last degree of severity and even bitterness, which can treat of Methodism with a good deal of historic fairness, and even utter panegyrics on its general character and operations. Not long ago, in 1849, it gave to the world an able review of Methodism in Wales, in which its chief fault, and the only thing to be complained of by the rankest Wesleyan, was its want of information; and yet earlier, in 1834, it held up the life and labors of John Wesley to the admiration of the British public, closing its *résumé* with something like an appeal to his shade to stand out in the defence of the Church of England against the unnatural confederation of its enemies:

"It must needs have ever been matter of great solicitude to John Wesley to know what was to become of Methodism when he should be no more. He could not but feel that, whilst he lived, he was the 'be all' of the singular society he had constructed; and he could not but have perceived the danger there was, that, when he should die, he would be its 'end all.' He enjoyed, it is true, a very long life in which to consolidate his plans; he was not called upon to surrender his functions to others till most of those contingencies, which were likely to derange his machinery, had arisen and been met. Still, the genius of the man—his capacity for government—did not appear fully manifest till after his departure. So deep had he laid his foundations in the knowledge of human nature, that, after death had deprived the Methodists of their leader—when their form of government became of necessity, and according to his own appointment, changed from a monarchy, which it was under him, to a republic, which it was to be under the Conference—the character of their Institution remained essentially the same; they continued a people still loyal to their king and true to the Constitution of their country, even as Wesley had enjoined them to be; and whilst the Dissenters, properly so called (for the Methodists do not acknowledge themselves such), exhibited

Digitized by Google

deep and early hatred to the Church Establishment, they, with every natural impulse, it might have been supposed, to the same sentiments, felt themselves still, as it were, under the spell of their Patriarch, though no longer in the flesh with them, and did not decline to attend the services of the Church, partake of her sacraments, and even adopt her forms of devotion. This is the greatest triumph of Wesley. He himself was held to the Church by associations early and strong—he had for his father a faithful minister of that Church; another for his elder brother, to whom he was under deep obligations, a man of the most masculine sense and the kindest heart. He was bred at Oxford, had been a successful student there, and was fellow of his college. Wesley, therefore, had lived within the penetralia of the temple, and well understood, by practical experience, the knowledge the Church diffused from her seats of learning, and the charities she inspired by her parochial ministrations. These restraints he never shook off in the days of his boldest visions as the Founder of an Order; but that he should have been able to impress it upon his followers, who had no such early bias, to take the same equivocal ground as himself, and that, whilst with him they were to *disturb* the harmony and discipline of the Church—there is no denying that—they were with him, too, to bear her some reverence and regard her with some good will—this is the most remarkable feature of *his* power, who, though dead, could yet speak so distinctly; and who, *if he were now alive, in this season of the Church's danger, would not be the man to stand silently by, consenting to her destruction at the hands of those unnatural confederates, the Infidel, the Dissenter, and the Papist.*"

Look, reader, and behold this wonder! About a century ago, this John Wesley and his assistants were turned out of doors by the Church of England, and then reviled for preaching in the fields and highways to the common people. Now, before the century was quite finished, that same

Digitized by Google

Church of England sees itself crumbling to pieces, and falling into ruin; and it sends out this cry of distress to the spirit of the great departed, though soberly intended for his living friends and representatives, to have pity on her misfortunes, and rescue her from impending annihilation! Could a higher compliment be paid to Wesley or to Methodism?"[37]

The same style of eulogy has at length become current in this country. But few quotations need be made in proof of this assertion, as they abound within the reach of every reader. A few months since, the Knickerbocker Magazine gave an elaborate and very complimentary review of the life, character, and services of Francis Asbury, the founder of Methodism in America; and even sectarian writers and periodicals have of late been unsparing of their respect, not only for Asbury and Wesley, but for the great cause for which they labored.

"The history of the rise and progress of Methodism," says the Rev. Dr. Murray, better known as Kirwan, "forms one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the Church of God. John Wesley was born in 1703. In May, 1739, the corner-stone of the first Methodist church ever erected was laid in Bristol, and already has the Methodist Church become one of the great religious powers of the world. With but little wealth—greatly persecuted at the beginning—with a ministry always adorned with great minds, but mainly uneducated—it has extended itself through Britain

[37] London Quarterly Review, vol. li., pp. 117–118, A.D. 1834. This appeal has excited the sympathy of the English Methodists; but it is impossible for them, or for any human power, to save the Church of England. When it rejected Wesley, it rejected its salvation; and now, like the Jewish Church after the rejection of Jesus, it must suffer the consequences to the bitter end. The only thing left for Methodism in England, as has been shown on a former page, is to gather up what may remain (after the downfall) of the pious membership of the National Church, and then occupy the place which that Church has forfeited.

Digitized by Google

and America; its missions dot the maps of Asia and Africa, as do the stars of the sky at night; its ministers march in the van of emigration to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and to the shores of the Pacific; and wherever the anti-Christian nations are opening to the Gospel, there soon is to be found the Wesleyan missionary, ready to carry the light of life to the benighted. Deterred by no rigors of climate, its ministers may be found burning under the line and freezing toward the poles; and fearing no privation, they may be found teaching the Indian in his wigwam, the African in his kraal, and the cannibals of the Pacific in their island homes. And whether agreeing or disagreeing with them as to their peculiarities, every *Christian* will rejoice in all that they are doing to glorify God or to save men. Although not collecting sheep into our (Presbyterian) fold, *we thank God for all they are collecting* INTO THE FOLD OF CHRIST."

In the same spirit, the New York Examiner, the organ of the Baptist denomination, in referring to Mr. Taylor's work, expresses the most kindly feelings toward the movement originated by Mr. Wesley, giving it as much honor as can be justly claimed by the warmest partisan: "The best treatise," says the Examiner, "which the age has furnished upon the rise and progress of Wesleyan Methodism, embracing a delineation of its features, and a clear view of the elements of its power, proceeded from the pen of Isaac Taylor, a distinguished layman of the Church of England. That work exhibits a fine example of historical research and of appreciative criticism. It has already exerted a powerful influence on the public opinion of our times, in relation to the character and the aim, the *broad scope and the moral dignity of that great religious movement*, which was begun within the bounds of the English church by Wesley and his coadjutors, and which has proved itself to have been *God's appointed instrumentality for rousing the English people from the slumbers of a deadly formalism, and imparting to*

Digitized by Google

millions of our race in all lands, THE SPIRIT OF VITAL CHRISTIANITY."

With equal candor, the Unitarians of this country have often acknowledged the indebtedness of the world to Methodism. The Christian Examiner, in a recent article, sums up its past history and future prospects in the most liberal manner:

"Methodism," says the Examiner, "has had a grand mission to fulfill in modern Christendom; a mission of mediation, we might say, between differing sects on the one hand, and between an exclusive church and a neglected world on the other. And there is a moral majesty in the firm and sure tread with which it has marched to the accomplishment of its work.

"In dogmatics Methodism has always been a standing protest, or rather persuasive, against bigotry. We can willingly believe that the repugnance which the wise father of Methodism felt for theological controversy arose mainly from the twofold apprehension, first, that it would distract and deaden the practical zeal and efficiency of the converts, and secondly, that it might engender bitterness and pride. To quote Mr. Withington's application of the text, he feared that *a viper might come out of the heat.* It is our opinion and experience that, of all Christian sects, the Methodists are those with whom, in their theological position, the so-called liberal Christians can most easily sympathize. Our chief practical difference in this respect would probably be, that controversy, which they dread as poison, we regard as the angel that stirs the pool of our Protestant faith, and keeps it from stagnating. Wesley carried his dread of controversy to such an extreme that, on one occasion, he laments that he had to 'spend near ten minutes in controversy with some Baptists, more than he had done in public for many months, perhaps years before.' For our own part, we do not believe that in the age which is coming, nay, which now is, it is

Digitized by Google

going to be quite practicable for Christian men to agree to use the same, even though they are Scriptural, words and phrases, when we understand them so differently as we do, without telling each other plainly, and asking ourselves distinctly what we mean by them. We may call what this must lead to *conference* or *controversy*, at any rate it is *reasoning together*, and in some form or other is an important help toward the attainment of the truth which sanctifies the soul.

"But we honor and admire Wesley's degree of neutrality in so far as it arose from his making the practical doctrines of religion and Scripture the essential ones, and the practical character of the dogma the grand test of its importance. Bravely has Methodism contended against the predominance of the merely speculative tendency in the Christian character and Church. And when we think of Wesley's position between Calvinism on the one hand and Pelagianism on the other, we do not remember a better illustration than he and his disciples afford of the pithy saying of 'Lacon,' that 'we should act with as much earnestness as those who expect everything from themselves, and pray with as much earnestness as those who expect everything from God.'

"The peculiar power of Methodism lies in the practical, wise, humane tendency of its efforts. 'By their fruits ye shall know them' is its leading motto, and we believe it can well abide this test. No church, except the Roman Catholic, can compare with the Methodist in the active determination to do away the reproof that 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' No church has done so much (notwithstanding what has been or may be said about the despotic *power* of its hierarchy) to defend the doctrine of the equal sanctity of sincere ministers of God, whether formally ordained or not; a favorite saying among Methodists is, that, 'it takes the whole church to preach the Gospel,' (certainly then to perform it).

Digitized by Google

"Perhaps in no one quality did the founder of Methodism more nearly resemble his great Master than in that true wisdom which is born, not of fear, not of time-serving selfishness, but of God-serving love for the soul of man. That 'wisdom from above' was conspicuous in every word and step of this holy man. It inspired that eminent tact by which he felt his way along, *desiring barely to follow Providence as it gradually opened.* It manifests itself in his pithy comments upon incident and character—in the very neatness and nicety of his style of expression—in the pat use of Scripture texts. It was strikingly exhibited in the way (*ingenious* without ceasing to be *ingenuous*) in which he steered clear of the dangers that lay in the quietism of the Moravians, the Calvinism of Whitefield, and the ecclesiasticism of Charles Wesley, and in the eclectic spirit that got what was good from each, the quietness from quietism, the sentiment of the sovereignty of divine grace from Calvinism, and from ecclesiasticism that reverence for 'Heaven's first law,' which made him for years cling to the hope of reforming the English Church without going out of it, and indeed to the day of his death unwilling to do more than provide against the future contingency 'that Methodism would be compelled, sooner or later, to take an independent and permanent form.'

"We are not sure that Methodism can be as successfully defended against the charge of a tendency (or liability) to bigotry in matters of Christian discipline, as in those of doctrine. Nobly, indeed preëminently, have the Methodists held forth and carried out the precept, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God.' Strenuously have they contended for the infusing of religion all through the daily life; but whether they have not been in danger of making the maxim read 'life for religion' instead of 'religion for life,' whether they have not too often adopted too narrow and formal and precise an idea of what religion is, and judged other men's character and conduct

Digitized by Google

with an unwise severity, is a question we are not prepared to answer in the negative.

"Of one thing we are confident, that the Methodist movement will be so guided by a good Providence, as to be made a mighty help toward the reign of brotherly equality among men, and of that genuine and wholesome universalism in theology, upon which we believe the coming of that heavenly kingdom so much depends."[28]

Such are the outside opinions, *pro et contra*, of what the world once reviled, but now quite generally appreciates and respects, under the name of Methodism."[29]

[28] Christian Examiner for March, 1859.

[29] If the reader wishes to look at large over the relation of the literary and religious press, of the higher grade, to Methodism, I will here furnish him with a summary of the more important references; but, in touching upon the subject in the body of this chapter, I had to choose between throwing out the greater part of the collection of quotations I had made, or reduce each quotation to a scrap. I chose to select the leading representatives of public opinion, in their several departments, and then let them speak at some length for themselves and for those who are represented by them. In the favorable quotations, I have furnished citations from those sources least likely to say anything on the behalf of Methodism, giving the reader the opportunity to infer what the more indifferent, or less unfriendly, portion of society would be willing to say, or has in fact said, respecting the Wesleyan movement. That I have presented a fair average of public opinion, on both sides, will be seen by a careful examination, not only of the works I have referred to, but of the following publications, which, though gathered, I have been unable to use in the foregoing pages: "Wesley Family," Westm. Rev. xix. 179; "John Wesley," Am. Bib. Repos., 2d ser., ix. 388; "Wesley and the Methodist Church," Church Review, iii. 245; "Wesley and the Principles Developed in his Character," Kitto's Journal, iii. 1; "Wesley and Whitefield," Christ. Month. Spec., iii. 471–530; "Southey's Life of Wesley," Christ. Disc., ii. 444, and Month. Rev., xcvi. 26; "John Wesley and the System of Methodism," Christ. Qr. Spec., i. 509, also viii. 353, also ix. 169; "Wesleyan Agitation, its Rise and Progress," Eccl. Rev., 4th ser., xxvii. 597; "Wesleyan Takings," Eccl. Rev., 4th ser., x. 404; "Methodism," Christ. Rev., vi., 45; "Methodism as it is," Eccl. Rev., 4th ser., xx. 329; "Methodism

Digitized by Google

in Wales," London Qr. Rev., lxxxv. 171, and Litt. Liv. Age, xxiv. 49; "Wesleyan Methodism," Month. Rev., cxv. 1, and Church Rev., v. 413; "Position and Policy of Methodism," Eccl. Rev., 4th ser., xiii. 64; "Progress and Policy of Wesleyan Methodism," Eccl. Rev., 4th ser., x. 196. I have a collection of several scores of similar publications, but a complete reference would be too lengthy for a note.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

METHODISM THE RECOVERED IDEAL OF CHRISTIANITY: THE FIRST CAUSE OF ITS SUCCESS.

HAVING, in the foregoing pages, made a statement of the success of Methodism, and given the reasons assigned for that success by its *outside* friends and opponents, I come now to a discussion of the causes of its acknowledged prosperity from a stand-point *within* the system itself. Being an individual connected with this movement, and having studied and observed it from this interior position for nearly thirty years, I wish to employ what intelligence I have in a candid and frank avowal of what I believe to be the leading causes, under God's special providence and power, to which it has been thus far indebted for its growth. I wish to call the particular attention of thinking men, not Methodists, as well as the thoughtful among ourselves, to an examination of these causes. It has been seen what other people have thought about the unexampled spread of Methodism. Some, viewing it from without, have thought it the offspring of the devil, either as a work of imposture, or of fanaticism; others, looking on it also from the outside, have thought it a system inspired and propelled by religious enthusiasm, but in itself good and beneficial; and these two classes of people, from whom the great majority of the estimates of Methodism have come, have almost exclusively occupied the public with their opinions for the last hundred years. The time has now come, as it seems to me, for Methodism to speak for itself. Hitherto, it has been so engaged with its great work of preaching the Gospel, and of saving the world, that there has

Digitized by Google

been scarcely a man to be spared for this secondary task. But the time urges that some one should utter what Methodism has to say in relation to this subject; and there are persons enough prepared to listen—to listen with intelligence and candor—to any answer to this popular demand that shall be marked by the same characteristics. It is not the history of Methodism that these thinking people want. That they have had and read to their satisfaction, so far as the facts of Methodism are concerned. The history, indeed, is only a presentation of the great problem of the Wesleyan movement. The history is itself the mystery to be resolved; and the only solutions of it, or at least the only solutions known extensively to the public, are outside solutions, made by persons who knew little or nothing of the interior spirit and power of Methodism. If only the spirit of a man can tell what is in the man, as the great philosopher of the New Testament has declared, so it is impossible for a person, however intelligent and laborious, not a part of a system, not dwelling within its bosom, to give of it a just and accurate interpretation. If Methodism is ever understood by the world at large, outside of its own pale, it will be understood by a revelation made from within itself; and it is precisely such a revelation for which mankind have been looking for these many years. They want an autobiography of Methodism; and they are willing to suffer the biographer to express his consciousness of the system he inhabits freely, and without the fear of being charged with egotism. It is egotism that everybody desires. Methodism has been in the courts for more than a century. Two classes of verdicts, and a variety of individual opinions, have been pronounced upon it; but every epoch of its history—and almost every year has been an epoch—has proved the inadequacy of these judgments; and now the courts say, in their embarrassment, as was said to Saul of Tarsus, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." This is the opportunity on which I seize;

Digitized by Google

taking the liberty given to Paul, I propose, also, to speak with freedom; and, therefore, in this chapter, I shall endeavor to show that Methodism has had its wonderful success, in the first place, not because it is of the devil, or even a good thing worked by fanaticism, but *because it is the recovered Ideal of original Christianity.*

A living American writer, who is both a philosopher and a Christian of great eminence, in a philosophical examination of the mental and moral capacities of man, furnishes a just conception of the true Ideal of the Christian system:

"In order to preserve the other principles of human nature in the position which the great Author of that nature has assigned to them, and to render their action just in itself and harmonious in its relations, we have reason to believe that there was originally in the human constitution a principle of LOVE TO THE SUPREME BEING. This affection, it may well be supposed, was entirely analogous, both in its nature and operations, to the other benevolent affections, possessing, like them, a two-fold action, *instinctive* and *voluntary*. It differed, however, greatly in the degree or intensity of its action, being rendered to its appropriate object, as might be expected from the unspeakably high and holy nature of that object, *with all the energy of which the mind was capable.*"[1]

This position is sustained by a variety of substantial, if not irrefragable, arguments. In all our surveys of the human system, physical, intellectual, or moral, we find that, wherever the Creator has established a relation between man and any other object, he has bound them to one another by a tie strong in proportion to the importance of their relationship. As physical beings, for example, we must have food; and, consequently, God has given us what we call an appetite for food. As intellectual beings, we have great want of know-

[1] Dr. Upham's Mental Philosophy Abridged, p. 395.

Digitized by Google

ledge; and so, there is planted within us a natural curiosity to know. As moral beings, it is of the utmost importance that we follow what is right; and, in exact correspondence, we are endowed with native feelings of approval of right, whether in ourselves, or in other persons. The same law holds in relation to man as a social being. As a father, it is necessary that I sustain and defend my offspring; and God has, therefore, given me a strong impulse toward them in what we call the paternal affection. My children, in the same manner, are bound to me by a corresponding tie, which we style the filial feeling. Precisely so, brothers and sisters, and all the members, near and remote, of a wide family connection, are held in the bonds of domestic fellowship. There is a relationship and a duty, also, in every one of us toward the land that gave us birth and affords us protection; and hence, we are all fastened to our native land by an affection, which is denominated patriotism, or the love of country. Besides, every individual is a part of the great brotherhood of man; and the consequence is, that, in spite of every selfish feeling so native to the human heart, every human being finds himself more or less swayed by the force of a personal sentiment, recognized by the word philanthropy, which is only a single term for what we call the love of the human race. It appears, then, that we are allied to all related objects, in respect to which we have any duties to perform, by modifications of the general principle of love; and the particular love, in any given case, is strong in proportion to the necessity and value of the relationship. The paternal, for instance, is stronger than the filial love, because the parent has much more to suffer and to do for the child, than the child has to suffer or to do for the parent. For the same high reason, the mother and her children are held together by more powerful feelings, on both sides, than commonly exist between children and their father. So, also, the love that binds me to my friend is weaker than the love by which

Digitized by Google

I am connected to my wife, or to my parents, because the relationship is of less consequence to society, and involves less of duty. But if all these things are as here stated, must there not have been, in the original state of man, a love binding him to his Father in Heaven, to his Creator and Protector, without whom he would not have been, and cannot now exist a moment; would the All-wise so nicely adapt every man to his fellow-man, in every possible relationship, and bind them all together in such unbroken order, for the purpose of inclining them by nature to the performance of their respective duties, and yet leave himself entirely out of the general system, while it is to him that we are more indebted than to all other beings, whose conscious influence we need more than we do all other objects, and toward whom, not only every duty, but every act of life, has altogether its most important bearing? Such a lack would destroy the order and the harmony of the universe. It would be as if the planets, and their satellites, of the solar system had been, as they are, all nicely balanced in their motions in respect to one another, but with no universal gravitation toward their common centre. The supposition, in the light of all analogy, is absurd. Love is the universal gravitation of the intelligent creation; it is the connecting principle of the handiwork of God; it is the pervading element of all time and space; and, before the harmony of the world was destroyed by sin, it not only held all human beings together in their individual relationships, by a strength proportionate to our individual wants, but held us all in close and felt relationship to him, whose character was to be our exemplar, and whose will our law.

If this supreme love to God was the ruling passion of our nature, prior to the existence of human sin, it is the want of it, and of what follows from it, that constitutes the condition of our present state. It is the loss of this paramount emotion, this intensest and mightiest of human feelings,

Digitized by Google

that makes and marks us what we are as fallen beings. Our consciousness is a living demonstration that the great want of humanity is this high and all-controlling love; our reason teaches us that, if we loved the Supreme Being with the greatest strength—with a fervor proportional to the relation existing between him and us—all other loves would be perfected, and every wrong and evil of the social state would be redressed; and to the same effect runs the tenor of the whole word of God. It is love that we have lost; it is our loves that have been perverted; and consequently, scarcely recognizing the existence and the claims of God, in respect to himself and to our fellow-creatures, mankind rush headlong into every form of sin. The fall of man is represented in revelation as a departure, a separation, from the living God. He is a branch broken off from the life-giving vine. He is a prodigal who, in despite of his filial love, has abandoned his father's house and set up life on his own account. Having lost their connection with the great system of creation, and with its centre, men are depicted as trees twice dead, as clouds driven by the winds, as wandering stars, sailing without direction through space, and destined to fall at last into the blackness of darkness forever. The great wickedness of the race is, according to the Scriptures, that they have forgotten God: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that *forget* God;" and the entire economy of the first dispensation was established for the expressed purpose of keeping up a remembrance of man's relations to the Almighty: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou *forget* the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons, *specially* the day that thou stoodest before THE LORD THY GOD in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they *may learn to fear* ME all the days that they shall

Digitized by Google

live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." This recollection, reverence, or *fear* of the Lord is represented as the beginning of wisdom; and the loss of it, therefore, was the beginning of our folly. We are spoken of in the older revelation as *haters* of God, having lost the great principle of love; and the Saviour makes the same accusation against mankind: "The world cannot hate you, but ME *it hateth*, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil."

It being true, then, according to consciousness, reason and revelation, that the original state of the race was constituted and marked by LOVE *to the supreme Being*, and that the generic idea of our present condition is that of *hatred* to our Creator—a hatred, however, admitting of a great variety of modifications and of all possible degrees—but a hatred, an opposition, a disobedience, which deranges the whole man—it is to be considered what Christianity proposes to accomplish; and we cannot look upon this question for a moment, with any measure of penetration, without seeing that the restoration of the race is the one great aim and end of what we all acknowledge as our religion. Its object is simply to restore man from what he is, as a hater of God, to what he was when he loved him with his utmost strength. Such is the plain and undeniable teaching of revelation. The Decalogue was the creed, the Articles of Faith, in that original Church of the living God founded in Paradise, supported by the patriarchs before and after the Flood, reformed by Abraham and established by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai; and the two Tables of it, containing our duties to God and to our fellow-man, seek only to restore to the members of that great communion the principle and practice of universal love. So, when Jesus began his mission of founding the new and everlasting Church, he reduces the ten commandments to their two general elements: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

Digitized by Google

with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He makes the distinct declaration that this twofold principle of universal love constituted the substance of the former dispensation: "On these two commandments," he says, "hang all the Law and the Prophets." These commandments he subsequently condenses into one; for well he knew that the man who should love God with all his heart would also love his neighbor; and consequently, the one pervading idea, the one only foundation of the Church of Christ, is universal love. All hatred, anger, wrath, malice, must be put away. We are to love God. We are to love our neighbor. Nay, we are to love our enemies, and pray for those who do us injury. We are to be like God, who loved the world when in direct opposition to himself: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:* for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye, therefore, perfect—[that is in love]—even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

This is the fundamental principle of Christianity, here directly proclaimed as such by its great Author, and everywhere supported by his inspired representatives. The most beloved of his disciples, who always sat nearest to his person, and who was commissioned to ask for explanations of his system by his less favored brethren, divides mankind into those who love, and those who do not love, God: "Beloved,

Digitized by Google

let us love one another; for love is of God; and *every one that loveth is born of God*, and *knoweth* God. He that *loveth not, knoweth not God;* for God is love." That is, God is love; and we must first love God in order to our knowing him; and the evangelist repeats the idea already quoted from the lips of Jesus, that, in love, the followers of Christ are to be to the world what God is to them: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him: Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because, AS *he is*, SO *are we in this world.*" And all this amounts to the simple declaration, that the object, aim, and end of Christianity is to remove malice from the human mind, and put in its place the sentiment, the feeling, and the practical demonstration of universal love.

This being acknowledged—and it cannot be for one moment doubted—it is plain enough that love is an exercise, not of the intellectual, but of the moral part of man. It is the work, not of the head, but of the heart; and it is precisely in accordance with this fact that the Scriptures everywhere represent what we have called the work of human restoration, or what is generally recognized by the word conversion, as an operation upon and within the heart: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"—"serve the Lord with all thy heart"—"circumcise thine heart"—"the word is in thine heart"—"wisdom entereth thine heart"—"my son, give me thine heart"—"the Lord looketh on the heart"—"the Lord trieth the heart"—"wisdom resteth in the heart"—"a man's heart deviseth his way"—"he that pondereth the heart"—"I will give them a heart to know me"—"a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh"—"keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"—"repent, and turn yourselves from

Digitized by Google

all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin; cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit" —these are specimens of the ordinary language of the older part of revelation; they are the law and the prophets on this fundamental subject; and the more recent revelation abounds with the same general idea of the work of grace: "Take my yoke upon you," says the great Exemplar of his system, "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." So the greatest of the apostles, who is the profoundest of all the commentators on the Christian system, tells his Jewish brethren that Christianity does not reject the doctrine of the circumcision, but that the circumcision of the new religion "is that of the heart." He represents Christians as the "living epistles" of their Redeemer, sent into the world as legible demonstrations of his power to save, and that the writing "was written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart." He admits the importance of faith and hope, which take their origin in the intellect, but makes them both subservient to charity, or love, which is an affection of the heart; and he will scarcely allow these intellectual operations to form a part of the experience of a true Christian, till they have passed through the alembic, which melts down the copper and the silver of the intellect into the golden current of heartfelt love: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Saving faith, in other words, is at last the work of the heart; and a person has only to believe with the heart, and confess Christ before the world with his lips, that he may become, according to the language of Jesus and his commissioned representatives, an heir of God, a child of God, a member of that glorious household whose center is God, and whose connectional principle is universal love.

So central and universal is this principle of love, in the

Digitized by Google

Christian system, that Jesus not only expresses it in every variety of form, but he took special pains, just before his ascension, and after he had tasted death, to repeat it in a manner which could never afterward be forgotten. It was the last time that he met with any considerable number of his twelve disciples. Seven of these his friends had been out on the sea of Tiberias, engaged in their former business of catching fish. They had spent a day and a night on the water, but without success. They had taken nothing. In the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, within a hundred yards of the spot where the fishing-vessel then was, and asked them if they had been prospered in their work. They told him, but without recognizing who he was, that they had been unsuccessful, not having any meat. To inform them, therefore, who he was, as well as to make the occasion forever memorable, he wrought a signal miracle upon their hands. He commanded them to cast their net on the right side of their vessel, they having been fishing, it is presumable, on the left. They obeyed, and their net was filled with the largest fish of the little sea. John, the most loving of the disciples, and so the quickest to perceive any manifestation from on high, exclaimed: "It is the Lord!" and Peter, the first-called of the disciples, and therefore regarding himself as the head of his fraternity, as prompt to act as John was to see, leaped into the water and made his way to land. His brethren followed him in their little boat. They pulled their net out upon the rocks and secured their prize; and then, looking up, they "saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." Jesus requested them to lay some of their own fish with his fish upon the coals; and then he invited them to sit down with him and eat. When all this preparation had been made for the great lesson that was to follow, Jesus, addressing himself to the eldest of the apostles, said: "Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

Digitized by Google

He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith unto him the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, LOVEST thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me; and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep." Thus, in this thrilling narrative, we have presented to us the one paramount qualification, not only of a Christian, but of a shepherd over the flock of Christ; and that one qualification, thrice repeated to make the value of it the more manifest, is LOVE.

Such being the Scriptural exposition of the great work of human restoration, and the substance of the Christian system, a thinking man cannot fail to see how admirably it is adapted to the nature of those whom it proposes to restore. Were our religion addressed originally and prominently to the human intellect, it would of necessity be a failure, as there are millions of the race entirely unfitted, in an intellectual point of view, to comprehend it; it would then not be a universal religion but the religion of the few; and with the few, indeed, it would be little more than a system of philosophical speculation. It would have the character, and probably the fate, of all systems of philosophy, which possess the common trait of being addressed to the human understanding, and which have never been known, in a solitary instance, to reform the morals and purify the life of their adherents. Christianity, however, in appealing directly to the heart, strikes at the centre of our being, where it comes into perpetual contact with all the springs of human action. Gain the heart of any man, and you have the man himself, whatever be his physical or intellectual condition. The heart rules the head. Not only every philosopher, but every thoughtful person, is conscious of the fact, that our rational

Digitized by Google

part is always very liable to be subdued by that portion of our nature, which contains our appetites, propensities, passions, and desires—which, by common consent, is styled the heart—but a majority of mankind are known to act upon the promptings of their hearts, even when these impulses are openly condemned by the clearest perceptions of the intellect. Our judgment may all the while condemn our life; but the life goes on, nevertheless, according to our desires. Where the heart lies, the whole man follows. However impotent, indeed, is every system of moral instruction and reformation, aimed mainly at the understanding—and this is the characteristic of all reformatory systems of human origin—that which is directed to the sensitive part of our existence cannot fail to have success. If men easily believe and yet more surely follow what they like, and avoid what they dislike—which is only saying that they generally act in accordance with their loves—how rational is the adaptation of that system, which begins its hallowed work by a re-creation, by a complete transformation, of the heart. The very moment that this controlling portion of our being receives into it again that love to the Supreme Being, which it had lost by sin, not only does it take command of our emotional and affectional nature, bringing every feeling into harmony with our relations to both God and man, but it passes onward and takes ultimate possession of the mental faculties, and of the physical habits; for we naturally give our minds to what we love; and the habits of body can in no case remain long opposed to those principles of conduct which our hearts admire and our reason sanctions. The only means, indeed, of gaining our whole existence even to a proper course of life, was to strike first and mainly at the heart; for the animal life, which the New Testament frequently calls the soul, and the intellectual life, will almost as certainly follow its dictation, as both extremities of the needle of the mariner fall into line in the direction of their pole; and it is a most significant fact, that,

Digitized by Google

in laying down the first and great commandment, which contains the law and the prophets, and which expresses the substance of the Christian system, the Author of that system recognizes the *nature* and the *order* of human recovery as logically as the profoundest philosophy could even now suggest: "*Thou shalt* LOVE *the Lord thy God with all thy* HEART, *and with all thy* SOUL, *and with all thy* MIND!" This is Christianity; this is our religion; and this is the order of its work—the heart, the habits, and the head!

But this is looking at Christianity only as it is related to the individual. If, however, we turn our eye to it as the proposed means of social reformation, its nature and the order of its progress will be equally admired. So far as society is concerned, indeed, it might be enough to say, that that which regenerates the individual is all that the world can want, as the world is only a mass of individuals. But it is the glory of Christianity to be perfect, in all its bearings, and to appear perfect, in every point of light. So, it not only makes every individual it controls precisely what he ought to be, by filling him with universal love, but it clears its own path to the most glorious success. That very love, which is its essence in the individual heart, is its power as a system of reform. The man who loves, that is, the truly Christian man, is the man of power in this lower world. There is nothing that can stand before this principle of universal love. By it you are yourself subdued, chastened, and refined into a most gentle and welcome being. Every person is melted into a similar gentleness at your approach. Your friends feel the throbs of a noble admiration as they see you out in the walks of life. Your enemies—enemies because they have not yet known you—blush at their hostility the moment they behold you in your proper character. Anger, revenge, malice, are transformed into personal respect. Prejudice gives way and passes off like the mist before the rising of the sun. Your strongest argument in your conflict with

Digitized by Google

error is the demonstration of your love. Love has the world of humanity, and even the animal kingdom, at command. There is not a man that lives who can turn entirely away from him the soft but soul-pervading presence of your love. There is not a beast of your fields, however docile now, which has not been reduced to his present submissiveness by the discipline of love. Love takes the lion from his lair, raging with passion, and shaking revenge from his brinded mane, and plies him with her gentle art, till the roaring monster is as meek and playful as a lamb. The hissing serpents of the South, which encircle and crush the horse and his rider in their folds, or which steal their path of death through the cover of bush and brake, subdued and softened by the gentle eye of him who protects and feeds them, learn trust and gratitude to their keeper, leap with delight at the sound of his friendly speech, and wind themselves around the naked neck and shoulders of a woman, or the waist and arms of the child, in sportive twist. The very fish of the sea, and the insects that spin from our ceilings or creep about our hearths, have been taught to frolic for our entertainment by the manipulations of a kindly hand. The world, and all that dwell upon it, are held under the resistless supremacy of this cardinal principle of our faith; it is this, which, in the progress of the great work of reconciliation of man to his Maker, has had such uniform triumph over every condition of mankind, in every age and quarter of the world; and it is this before which the hut of the Hottentot, and the palaces of kings, and every order and variety of human ignorance and knowledge, with all the forms and degrees of this world's happiness and wretchedness, elevation and depression, imbecility and power, are destined, in the consummation of its enterprise, to stand together on one common level of universal benevolence, beneficence and joy. Love, in a word, is absolutely almighty; for, as the loving evangelist has boldly expressed it: "*Love is of God, and God is love!*"

Digitized by Google

The genuine ideal of Christianity is, therefore, without a doubt, that it is a work wrought by the power of God upon the human heart, in the course of which the speculative faculties of the intellect play but a meager part, if any part at all. Faith, I know, which the Apostle sets forth as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, has been very generally looked upon as an intellectual act based on what philosophers call belief; and some writers, whose theological training should have taught them better, have spoken of ordinary belief, that is, logical credence founded on evidence according to the laws of the understanding, as the first degree of Christian faith. But this position is entirely erroneous. Faith, as the Scriptures represent it, is not the work of the understanding, but of the moral part of our constitution. That very Apostle, who gives us this definition of faith, and who was as profound in philosophy as he was experienced in Christianity, informs us distinctly that the act he defines is an act of the sensibilities, of the affections, and not of the understanding: "With the *heart*," says he, "man believeth unto righteousness." He describes the work of conversion according to the same principle: "But God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed *from the heart that form of doctrine* which was delivered you." The doctrine, which was that of love to God and man, was addressed to their hearts, and from their hearts sprang that obedience which constituted their claim to the recognition and fellowship of the apostolic church. The Great Teacher had given this same exposition of the work of faith: "For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea'—*and shall not doubt in his heart*—but shall *believe* [in his heart, of course, as the *belief* must belong where the *doubt* does] that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." So taught all the apostles in the days of primitive Christianity. The

Digitized by Google

case of the eunuch will be recollected. He was the treasurer of queen Candace of Ethiopia. He had been on a religious visit to Jerusalem; and he was returning through the desert of Gaza homeward in his chariot. Philip, a man of great piety and zeal, was sent to him by a direct impression of the Spirit. He found him reading from the writings of Isaiah. He expounded those writings to him, making them center, as they do, on the life and offices of Jesus. The eunuch was touched; he made his submission to the doctrine opened to him by the evangelist; and, beholding water near at hand, he exclaimed: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" In other words, "why may I not now become a member of the Christian Church?" Behold, now, the mark of conversion and the test of admission into the Church of Christ, as announced by an Apostle acting under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "If thou *believest*," said Philip, "*with all thine heart*, thou mayest." The eunuch answered: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This was the convert's confession of faith—the only creed required for his admission by an inspired Apostle into the Church of God—and the faith here confessed, according to the inspired record of the case, was the work, not of the understanding, but of the eunuch's loving and trusting heart. He was required to believe, with all his heart, the doctrine of Isaiah as explained by Philip, that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. This faith, and this alone, he did at once profess; and he was consequently received directly into fellowship with the heirs of eternal life. This is the same test, the identical profession, everywhere called for, and the only confession demanded, by Jesus and his immediate representatives. They present to the intellect no system of opinions; they trouble their followers with no intellectual problems; they hold forth to the candidates to church fellowship no articles, no creeds, requiring philosophical abilities and pro-

Digitized by Google

found investigations; they ask them simply whether, in their hearts, they can and do trust themselves for salvation to the mercy of Jesus Christ, whatever they may know or not know, believe or not believe, in relation to any other question; and if satisfied that they rely solely on Jesus as their personal Redeemer, they go no further, but admit them at once into the company and household of faith. They make a total separation between opinions and faith, between doctrines and religion; for Jesus expressly admits that the Scribes and Pharisees taught well enough, while they knew nothing of that inward work, which he came to exemplify and deliver to the world: "All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they *say*, and *do not*." Their opinions and instructions, their creeds and articles, are right; but they have not received and exercised faith in me. They believe in a Messiah; but they do not yield themselves, in fact, at heart, by faith, to the Messiah when he has appeared. They have studied with great diligence the books of revelation and the writings of their leading authors; they have meditated profoundly upon the great truths given them from the upper world; they have made up very excellent summaries of revelation, which they cordially acknowledge, receive and profess; but all this gives them no claim to being my disciples. They believe all that is necessary, but have not faith; they say, that is, profess, what is needful, but do not act; they are yet Scribes, Pharisees, *hypocrites*, possessed of every intellectual qualification, but without that paramount, practical and overwhelming *love to God and man*, which true faith recognizes as embodied and manifest in me!

So entirely was St. Paul possessed with this central idea of the Christian system, that, in the most elaborate and beautiful passage of his writings, he draws out the parallel between this principle of universal love and the other leading characteristics of the Christian life; and he compares it with those

Digitized by Google

gifts and graces of the mind most coveted by merely intellectual men: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *charity*"—the Greek word for *love*—"I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbal." He sets it before faith and knowledge: "Though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all *faith*, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." He gives it precedence over alms-giving, or acts of beneficence to the poor, which superficial religionists are so apt to receive as the essence of the Christian life: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." He establishes his position by showing some of the results and consequences of this love: "Charity suffereth long and is kind—charity envieth not—charity vaunteth not itself—is not puffed up—doth not behave itself unseemly—seeketh not her own—is not easily provoked—thinketh no evil—rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things—believeth all things—hopeth all things—endureth all things." That is, love is the soul and substance of faith, hope, patience, and of every Christian virtue; it is utterly unselfish, preparing its recipient for that kindness to our fellow-being, and for that submissiveness to the will of God, which have been before explained as the two great commandments of our Lord; and it has the crowning value of perpetual existence, while every other element of our religion, even our faith and hope, which are finally to be "swallowed up in victory," is to pass away: "Charity *never faileth*; but whether there be prophesies—*they* shall fail; whether there be tongues—*they* shall cease; whether there be knowledge—*it* shall vanish away. For we know in part; and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child—I understood as a child—I thought as a

Digitized by Google

child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Every gift and grace, even of the Christian character, excepting only love, which is of the nature of the eternal God, is only a temporary quality to be thrown aside, when we reach our "being's end and aim," as a child throws off at the threshold of his majority the habits of his youth. Faith goes with the other provisional arrangements of the present state; "For now we see through a glass darkly"—the glass is faith—"but then face to face"—when the temporary aid to our spiritual vision will be thrown away: "Now I know in part; but then I shall know as also I am known." The conclusion of the whole argument includes everything that can be said: "Now abideth"—for a final comparison—"faith, hope, charity—these three; but *the greatest of these is* CHARITY." [1]

[1] Dr. Adam Clarke (Com. vol. vi., p. 264) considers this chapter the most important in the whole New Testament, and, among many profound and learned statements, makes the following general remarks: "Love," he says, "is properly the *image of God* in the soul, for *God is* LOVE. By *faith* we *receive* from our Maker; by *hope* we *expect* a future and eternal good; but by *love* we *resemble* GOD; and by it alone are we *qualified* to *enjoy* heaven, and be one with him throughout eternity," Dr. Cudworth (Int. Syst. of the Universe, vol. i., p. 280) makes a very profound use of this chapter, presenting the principle of LOVE not only as the essence of Christianity, but as the bond that connects man to God. Dr. Clarke, however, according to my apprehension, in making Christian *faith* and *hope* as permanent as *love*, for a moment loses sight of the natures and offices of these two graces. Christian *faith*, as I think, is not that general *expectancy* with which we shall through eternity look forward to the unceasing developments of a never-ending system of revelation; but it is simply the act of the soul in accepting Christ as its Redeemer; and *hope* is that looking after the fulfillment of his promises, during our period of probation till we enter upon our inheritance, which will then be superseded by fruition. Dr. Cudworth, too, in making love, as the perfection of human character—love to God and man—a dogma of the Platonic philosophy, is not supported, I am certain, by any passage in that philosopher. Plato does say, in a score of places, that the highest excellence of God, whom he everywhere calls the Τὸ Ἀγαθὸν, is his *goodness*; and, in this respect, as well as for this

Digitized by Google

There cannot be a question, indeed, that love to God and man constitutes the substance of the Christian character; that it is the general virtue from which spring all the other virtues of the Christian life; that faith itself, as well as hope, is the offspring of love, and not love of faith. The process of the soul's approach to God, psychologically speaking, is clearly this: First, the character of God, and his relations to us his creatures, whom he has not only made, but redeemed and sustained, is revealed in the Bible, and subsequently impressed upon the mind, again and again, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, from our constitution, we have a sense that compels us, more or less, to yield our approbation to what is good and right, and to disapprobate what is evil and wrong. Working upon this sense, as well as upon other powers of the soul, the Spirit makes us see the goodness of the Lord, and the long-suffering of God, and to compare what we feel, by the same assistance, that we are ourselves with this glorious Being, thus producing in us self-condemnation and a degree of admiration for this boundless excellence and perfection. Christ is then held up, by the continued agency of the Bible pressed home by the action of the Holy Spirit, as the Mediator between us and God, who, by the appointment of the Father, is able to save us from our sins. God appears more and more lovely in this loving work; his character, as thus beheld, inspires us with greater degrees of admiration, which, in process of time, by the continued help of the Spirit, deepens into love: "We love him, *because* he first loved us." We see how good he is; what wonderful things he has done, not for our punishment, but for our recovery; and, his spirit still working with our

reason, he makes him (De Legibus lib. iv. and many other places) the *μέτρον πάντων*—the measure or *standard* of all things; but the idea, that *the substance of religion is love to God and man*, is an idea conferred upon the world by revelation; and no man can even now understand it fully, till he learns it experimentally at the feet of the great Master.

Digitized by Google

spirits, we return love for love. And this love—this admiration of his character and of his conduct toward us—gives us confidence. We have confidence in him; we have confidence in his plan of salvation; we have confidence in the means set forth for our restoration; we have confidence in the great Agent sent here as the Representative of the Father; we at last, throwing away every other trust, cast ourselves upon him; we accept of Christ as the "*gift* of God" for our recovery; and this—*this* is faith. Faith is thus the work of God, and the *consequence of* LOVE. Love is the prevenient *sentiment* toward God that prompts to the acceptance of the Son; faith is the *act*, proceeding (by the help of God) from that foregoing sentiment, *by* which and *in* which the Son is accepted by the admiring, loving, trusting soul; the two states come so close together, and the one is so consequent upon the other, that they would seem to be coetaneous; but the former is as really the precedent of the other, as the lightning is the precedent of thunder. The flash and its report may *seem* to come together; or a startled observer, or recipient, may *think* that he heard the report before he saw or felt the flash; but a more perfect examination shows that the *explosion* must precede its audible *expression*. In like manner, whatever may appear to a careless or superficial observation, love anticipates and prompts to faith; and then, from the subsequent action and reaction of these upon each other, as well as from their joint and individual continuance and increase, follow all the Christian graces of the ripest Christian character. But love is the beginning of this character; love will also be its final result in heaven; it is love that binds, and will ever bind, persons professing and possessing it together; it is love that binds them all to their Redeemer; it is love that constitutes his connection with us and with his Father; and the Alpha and Omega of it all—the beginning and the ending of this golden chain—is God, who himself is love.

Digitized by Google

Individual consciousness may be cited in proof of this Scriptural statement of the substance of the Christian system. It can be asserted without the risk of dissent, I believe, that there never has been a genuine case of conversion, where the regenerate man did not feel, as his first experience, that new and inexpressible good-will toward God, which prompts him to renounce himself and rely on God for his personal salvation. The next step in the process, according to the same testimony, is the actual reliance, the positive acceptance of Jesus Christ as his own Saviour, on whom he now depends, freely and fully, for present and everlasting safety. The moment this act is consciously performed, without a reservation, there springs up in the soul, or there is imparted to it, that HOPE of eternal life, which, ever afterward, like a sure and trusty anchor, gives to the tempest-tossed probationer a sense of security which passes understanding, and which sometimes manifests its strength in exclamations of the most rapturous delight. From that blessed hour, these three elements of the Christian life are found living together within the heart; the good man, in speaking of his new condition, will sometimes talk about his hope, at other times of his faith, and then of his love to God and his fellow-man; and it makes no difference of which he speaks; for either one implies the others; while all are required to make up the perfection of his character; but it must still be recollected, that love is the beginning, and will be the heavenly consummation, of this spiritual and eternal life. According to the Apostle, it is CHARITY that "*believeth* all things" and "*hopeth* all things;" that is, faith and hope are only certain states of love; and all these states together, which constitute the maturity of practical religion, let it be emphatically remembered, are not intellectual changes, or intellectual operations and experiences, but, according to the psychology of revelation, however the intellect may act in relation to them, are the workings of that part of our mental being which contains the sensibilities

Digitized by Google

and affections. Christianity, in other words, is not a system of opinions—is not an adherence to certain articles of belief —is not the result of any exercise of our intellectual faculties —but is a work wrought by the power of God's Spirit upon the heart. It is a restoration of that love to the Supreme Being, the loss of which left a derangement of our entire moral being, and by the recovery of which the whole man is again set right.

It cannot be said, I know, that the intellectual faculties have no connection whatever with this work. Nor need this be said; for, if the intellect has ever so much to do with it, the result is not an intellectual state. Because an emotion, or a passion, requires a foregoing perception and reflection, which are undeniably intellectual operations, the emotion, or the passion, does not therefore cease to be an experience of the heart, and become a state or condition of the head. Were such a conclusion logical, it would be logical to say, that every perception, and every act of reflection, is a sensation, as it is certain that perception and reflection begin with the senses by having sensations for their objects. By the same law of reasoning, not only all states of the intellect, but all the experiences of the heart, become sensations; for all the feelings are traceable through the intellect to those sensible impressions made upon us by material things; and in this way, too, sensations, perceptions, reflections, and emotions, and desires—everything there is in us—become material, as our whole inward life, when traced backward to its occasions, is followed out of us through the senses to the material world. But this is no Christian exposition of the subject. This would be infidelity; and it would be a form of infidelity which has been forever overthrown by the triumphs, not only of religion, but of philosophy, which, whatever may be the origin of our mental states, or whatever mental states may precede other states, makes as much distinction between *feelings* and *thoughts*, as it does between

Digitized by Google

reflections and *perceptions*, or *perceptions* and *sensations*, or *sensations* and the *material objects*, from which the sensations are derived. The apple implies the preëxistence of the bud; the bud, the twig; the twig, the limb; and the limb, the tree; but we do not, for this reason, confound all these objects together, and make the fruit identical with its precedents. So, whatever service may be performed for the affectional nature by the intellect, in the great work of conversion, the work itself is a resulting state and condition, not of the understanding, but of the regenerated heart.

Nor do we find, indeed, in the most persevering researches in this direction, that a man's moral condition is very often the logical result of his intellectual state. Were this so, the most knowing men would be the best men; for their knowledge gives them more correct opinions than are held by the ignorant; and these opinions, for the same reason, should have the greater weight with them, as they are so much more capable of perceiving their true bearings and importance. The truth is, on the contrary, that opinions have but very little influence upon the moral conduct, or condition, of mankind. The Greeks and Romans, as is well known, not only believed in gods of very immoral character, but even worshipped them, and yet, in thousands of instances, without contracting the vices of their deities. In the same way, there are millions of men now living in Christian countries, who are logically convinced of every article of the Christian system—who believe in God, in Christ, in the offices of the Spirit—who record repentance, faith, and love among the most sacred of human duties—who, nevertheless, are as wicked in heart and life as any race of heathen. There is something remarkable in this want of connection between what is called theoretical belief and actual conduct. Bishop Berkeley, a very profound philosopher, reasoned himself into a denial of the existence of matter; but he was as particular about his dinner as other people. A distinguished Presbyterian clergy-

Digitized by Google

man of this country, one day preached a powerful discourse, as president of one of the branches of the national society called the American Evangelical Union, in which he shed tears over the "uncharitableness and dissensions" of religious denominations, and the next day, or next evening, delivered another discourse before the General Assembly of his church, in which he denounced all persons holding the Arminian theology as "arrant fools." In the one case he was speaking from his head; in the other, from his heart; and it is wonderful how small an influence is exerted by our theories upon our practice. Get possession of the heart, and it carries the understanding, and the life of both soul and body, with it; but you may have the most perfect control over the physical and intellectual man, without any perceptible or practical effect upon his conduct.

We thus learn, that it is not only impossible to reform mankind by making our attacks upon their understanding, and that Christianity pursues the only practical method of reformation, but that a good Christian life, flowing from a warm and loving heart, is possible to a man who entertains, intellectually, very erroneous opinions. His opinions, indeed, though he argue for them with the vehemence and pertinacity of Bishop Berkeley, may have no influence whatever upon his practice. I had once a neighbor and a friend, who, in argument, was accustomed to defend capital punishment with great earnestness; he made his position on the subject a kind of hobby; he would denounce with terrible severity all such as maintained a milder course of punishment; I used to shudder, sometimes, to hear him express his sanguinary views; and I thought him, though possessed of many excellences of character, a sort of Draco at heart, until I heard his wife relate how they lived several days without meat, on a certain occasion, because her husband could not kill a chicken. His reasoning was from his head, not his heart. He *thought* like a lion, while he *felt* like a lamb. Sometimes

Digitized by Google

the order is reversed. Men will feel intense anger, revenge, malice, but keep themselves calm, and even acquire reputation for gentleness, by exercising upon themselves a superior intellectual control. It is said that Richard of the Lion Heart, who could ride unmoved through the bloodiest of his battles, used to weep on hearing the report of his officers at night. The abilities of a warrior are oftentimes only intellectual abilities; war is his profession; he fights by rule and plan; but his heart relents when the day's work is done. Alexander the Great, who waded to universal empire through seas of blood, was not a bloodthirsty man, while Julius Cæsar, the destroyer of his country's liberties, was at heart a patriot. History is full of contradictions of this nature. The world is full of them; and they exist in relation to religion, as frequently and as prominently as in regard to secular and philosophical concerns. Mankind are everywhere thinking, reasoning, judging in one way, while they are feeling and living in another. St. Augustine maintained in his writings, as well as in his oral discourses, that God had so settled, determined, and fixed the plan of his creation, that every motion of matter and every operation of the human mind were as fast as fate; and yet, in those very productions, written and unwritten, when touching upon practical affairs, addressed men as if he considered all their acts exclusively their own. Precisely so, John Calvin and his followers of every school, will hold up in argument the dogma, that God from all eternity has established and limited the number of human beings to be saved; that that definite number can neither be diminished nor increased by anything that any person, or the whole world, can do; and yet, when the argument is over, they will urge men to repent, believe, and be saved, as if their salvation depended, as it really does, entirely on themselves. And these things being so, why are we not compelled, in simple consistency, to extend the application of this principle to every contradiction of this kind?

Digitized by Google

If so absurd a theory as this Calvinism can hold its place in a man's *intellect*, without discouraging and freezing up his *heart*, why may not another man be a real Christian, while he maintains, intellectually, other opinions however contradictory and absurd? May not a person *theoretically* believe, that God is pledged to save all mankind, without the smallest effort of their own, and yet, *practically*, exert himself to "work out his own salvation," as if his recovery began and ended with himself? May not another, who denies the equal deity and dignity of Jesus Christ, while reasoning upon the subject, nevertheless regard him, however absurdly, as a *sufficient* Saviour unto all such as put their trust in him, and thus be saved in spite of this theological contradiction? May not the Roman Catholic, who, in theory, puts the priest in the place of Christ, and goes to him for a dispensation of his sins, at the same time so look through the entire machinery of Romanism to the Son of God, the great High Priest whom the system of his denominational priesthood professes to represent, as to secure a salvation which holds its seat, not in the intellectual division of our nature, but in the heart? Are we not bound, in other words, to make a wide distinction—a distinction *with* a difference—between a man's *opinions* and his *religion*? May not the one be even exceedingly erroneous, even heterodox, while the other is evidently a work wrought upon his moral nature by the Spirit of God, according to the genuine experience of all Christians? Are we not compelled, in fact, in settling the question whether a person has or has not true religion—whether he is or is not a real Christian—to lay aside his opinions, his belief, his articles of faith, and look altogether at the state and condition of his heart? Will any one pretend to say, with all the facts of the case before him, that it is impossible for a man to *love God supremely and his neighbor as himself*—that is, *to be a Christian*—while he has superficial and unsatisfactory views, and holds opinions *logi-*

Digitized by Google

cally contradictory to his actual condition? But if such a thing be possible, then a man's creed is no longer to be considered an indispensable part of his religion. He may have religion with a very poor, shallow, unscriptural creed. He may have religion with no creed at all. A creed is nothing in the world but an intellectual statement of what are supposed to be the essential elements of the Christian system of personal salvation. It is not the fact, nor does it include the fact, of our actual condition in religion. It is only our explanation of that fact. But the fact may exist, and does exist, with a very poor explanation, or with none whatsoever. And it is a matter of experience and observation, as well as of logical inference, that the great mass of real Christians, who subscribe their names to their several explanatory articles of faith, never comprehend, nor even try to comprehend, the particular explanation they profess of their own heartfelt condition. What their hearts feel, and what they know by the testimony of the Holy Spirit within their hearts, is their real reliance for their personal satisfaction that they are Christians. They know that they love God; they know that they love their fellow-beings; they know that they feel a peculiar love to their brethren of the household of faith; they know that they are striving to live a life of love—to do works meet for repentance—to keep God's commandments—to rely every moment on the blood of Christ; and they know that the Bible makes these the elements, and the criterion, of the true Christian character. They are thus satisfied, caring but little about their creed, or whether they have any creed at all. The denominations to which they belong might change these articles of belief, these systems of theological opinion, these human statements of the work of God upon the heart, and change them every year, or every day and hour, without affecting in the least the daily and hourly experience of those who live this life of love, not by any nutriment from these intellectual expositions of their

Digitized by Google

state, but by faith on the Son of God. Not only so, but these theories of salvation, these systems of opinion, and the opinions themselves, might be entirely dispensed with, overlooked, and abolished, without producing the slightest influence upon the religion, or religious state, of those concerned. It is this religion of the heart, indeed, independent of all theories of explanation, and in spite of numerous contradictory, illogical, unscriptural explanations existing in the theologies of opposing denominations, which has preserved through all ages, and down to our own times, a true apostolic church, consisting of those of every name whose hearts were filled with love, faith, hope—who had become new creatures in Christ Jesus—and who did not confound their religion with their opinions. This small but illustrious line of real Christianity can be traced to the very days of the apostles; through the apostolic era it can be followed to the ministry of Jesus; and there we find its prototype in the person of the man born blind, who, when his blindness had been removed by the miracle wrought upon him, would not be compelled to give his *opinion* in relation to it, but confined himself to a simple statement of the *fact:* "One thing I *know*, that, whereas I *was* blind, *now* I SEE."

Christianity, indeed, was at the first universally regarded, not as a set of opinions, but as a work of regeneration wrought upon the heart. It was not a great logical conclusion drawn from premises found in nature or in revelation. It was a plain and simple fact—a fact felt within the soul—a fact which could be known by the regenerated man, who had intelligence to know whether he loved or hated his neighbor and his God. It was a fact including a change from hatred to love, from infidelity to faith, from fear and dread to a lively and living hope. It was a fact including all the graces, and all the joy and triumph, of the Christian life. It was the glorious fact included in the Saviour's proposition to Nicodemus—"*Thou must be born again;*" and it was such a

Digitized by Google

fact, that it must not only convince the subject of it of its existence and character, but which the most skeptical of the world could not ultimately deny. The world did at the first, it is true, like the Pharisees at the examination of the blind man, undertake to maintain an absolute denial of the fact; and there has been a portion of mankind in every age, who have refused to concede the statement, that a man may, or that men do, experience what is called regeneration, or a change of heart and life. But a very large remainder of the world, including its profoundest thinkers, compelled by the evidence of human testimony, as well as by personal observation, have admitted the possibility, and the existence, of this change; but, instead of satisfying themselves with seeking and obtaining an experience of the work upon themselves—the only thing essential to their salvation and to their peace of mind here or in the world to come—they have set it up as a problem for universal speculation; and then, what is yet more deleterious to the cause of genuine Christianity, they have gradually substituted their *opinions of the fact* for the *fact itself*. This work of corruption began in the very days of the apostles. Their age was an era of knowledge and of curiosity; it was an era of peace; the ages of war and tumult had passed away; mankind had little to do but to read, think, and reflect upon questions of permanent or momentary interest; and this question about the Christian religion—the great fact of the regeneration of a man's moral nature—became the particular problem of general study and investigation. The existence of a heart-felt religion being admitted as a fact, both by Christians and Pagans, speculative men everywhere undertook to explain it to their personal satisfaction. Their several explanations, of course, would correspond to their respective theories of philosophy which included all questions relating to God, man, and nature. The atheistic philosophers, Greek, Roman, and oriental, as they have done in every subsequent period, followed the

Digitized by Google

whole of this heartfelt experience to material causes, and gave of it a material solution, or made it the object of their laughter. The theists, on the other hand, consisting of those called Gnostics and of the Greek and Roman disciples of Thales of Miletus, the first man of Greece to acknowledge and maintain the existence of an immaterial and therefore immortal soul, offered for this Christian fact a variety of explanations, all of them, however, making God the Father the author of the change, of whom Jesus of Nazareth was the representative, but not his equal. The Christian body itself, made up of learned and unlearned, but principally of those classes which did not enjoy the benefits of education, soon received into its communion persons of eminent abilities and great knowledge, who, prior to becoming Christians, had been philosophers of reputation; they brought their habits of speculation, and the speculations themselves, with them; and the result was, that, before the close of the second century, the Church of Christ, which commenced as a company of men and women professing love to God and man without any theories of its origin, nature and operation, was divided into parties ranged under the respective champions of these intellectual expositions. Those of the thinking converts who had been Jews were determined to make such an explanation of the work wrought upon them, as would leave Moses and the Law in a respectable position, while the believers of Pagan origin had their temptations so to explain the religion of their new Master as to give as little umbrage as possible to those whom they had been accustomed to respect. The very object of their ecclesiastical organization, the conversion of the world, forced upon the early Christians, as they thought, some rational explanation of what they felt within them. They wished to recommend religion to those around them; and it was natural that, when met by the prejudices of the world, they should endeavor to give such an account of their new condition as would best satisfy those

Digitized by Google

whom they desired to benefit. Controversies, also, were soon started, not only within the body of the church itself, as at Antioch in relation to circumcision, but between the great defenders of the church and their Jewish and Pagan assailants, who were busy with such solutions of the work they beheld, as they were prompted to make by the systems of speculation which they had adopted. The opinions of those, therefore, outside of the Christian body, who desired to give some account to themselves of its remarkable phenomenon of conversion, and the opinions of the more celebrated Christian doctors, who naturally wished to satisfy this class of persons, as well as to make their religion generally acceptable, soon became prevalent in the Church of Christ. There at once appeared, in consequence, a Judaizing Christianity, which was marked by the pomp and show of an august ritual, and by a general leaning, in its own explanation of itself, to Jewish ideas. The oriental philosophy, which was divided into several sects, and which made creation and every important being in it an *æon*, or emanation, from the original creator, of which the oriental philosophers and the Hebrew patriarchs and teachers, including Christ himself, were exalted specimens, arose among the disciples of Jesus with a variety of intellectual theories of the new birth professed by Christians. Then sprang up within the church all the divisions and subdivisions of the Roman and Greek philosophy, a contradictory mass of metaphysics, each section vying with every other in furnishing rational and satisfactory solutions of the great Christian mystery. The consequence of this state of things was war—war between the church and the speculative world—and war among the theorizing doctors of the Church itself. So early even as the second century, there was a furious controversy begun between the Christians and the Jews, at first carried on in behalf of the Church by Justin Martyr and Tertullian, and afterward by Origen, Arnobius, Cyprian, and Minutius

Digitized by Google

Felix, in which too many concessions to Judaism were made by men professing to defend the simple doctrines of the Cross. The controversy with the Paganism of the Roman empire was also a bitter one, and was managed, on the part of the Christians, by Athenagoras, Melito, Tatian, Clemens of Alexandria, and Origen, who, with all their zeal for Christianity, seemed not to understand its real character, treating it mainly as a system of intellectual dogmas. Origen, also, the most learned and able Christian between the death of the apostles and the establishment of Christianity as the national religion of the empire of Rome, was the champion of the Church against the leading sects of the classic philosophers; but he had been himself a philosopher of the Platonic school; and, though evidently a converted man, he took pride in proving to the world, and especially to the party he had left, that the Christian religion could be entirely accounted for and explained by those precepts laid down by the sage of Academus. Plato had divided his doctrines into *exoteric* and *esoteric*, and his school at Athens into corresponding departments; and Origen, therefore, had a *literal* and a *mystical* interpretation for every passage in the Bible. Plato, making matter and mind equally eternal, and matter the evil principle in nature to be overcome at last by mind, had represented the human body as the prison of the soul, which had the right to break the material bars and fetters by every possible severity to the physical frame, till the purified spirit should be released from its material thralldom. So Origen, applying the doctrine to Christianity, and taking advantage of every expression of the New Testament enjoining self-denial, introduced into the Church of Christ those austerities, which subsequently became the discipline of the Roman Church. Plato had taught that only the most illustrious characters ascended directly to a place of felicity and light, immediately after their decease, while the general mass of even moral and good men sunk to an inferior region,

Digitized by Google

where they remained till fitted, by the most painful efforts and abstemious regimen, for a loftier residence. Origen, bowing to this dogma, introduced the novel doctrines of purgatory, of the purification of the soul after death, and the possible restoration of the race through the instrumentality of future suffering. In the same way, he proceeded to explain the simple phenomenon of salvation by Christ, till Christianity utterly disappeared; and such was his genius, his learning, his eloquence, and his influence among the doctors of the church, that his Platonizing system was soon generally received by the better educated classes of Christians in every quarter of the world. And thus stood the Church of Jesus Christ, with constant fluctuations, however, as it was acted upon by outside events, till the conversion of Constantine made it, with all its internal and external controversies, the established and only religion acknowledged and protected by Roman law.

From that period the fortunes of Christianity are well known. At first, Constantine wished to reconcile his heathen subjects to the doctrines of the Cross; and the leading divines set themselves to work, in gratitude to their sovereign, to accommodate, more completely than before, everything connected with their religion to the prejudices of all ranks and nationalities of the Roman world. Discouraged with the slow progress of this enterprise, and stimulated by the more pugnacious of the bishops, the emperor at length made a general profession of Christianity obligatory upon all his subjects; and, by this means, there was taken into the Church, at one fell sweep, all the superstitions of Gentiles and Jews, of the philosophers of every sect, and of the ignorant multitude full of ridiculous fancies and ready for every idle dream. But Constantine soon passed away; and his place was supplied, in the year 362, by Julian, who had been a Christian, but who gradually returned to the worship of his Pagan ancestors. The Christian doctors were now com-

Digitized by Google

pelled to lay aside their labor of reconciling a recusant population to a religion which they were unwilling to understand, and to enter again into those controversies, which had been partially neglected during Constantine's more quiet reign. Platonism, however, continued to be the leading corruption of the truth; but it took a great variety of positions, and passed through several changes, till it was at last undermined by the philosophy of Aristotle; and then began, from these causes, and from the irruptions of the northern barbarians, to whom the Christian doctors were as pliant as they had before been to the more civilized Roman population, that long *régime* of intellectual and moral darkness, which is known in history as the Middle Ages, and during which the purity and simplicity of the religion of Jesus were lost amidst the pomp, and splendor, and power of the now mature and world-wide Establishment of Rome.

Such, as every one knows, is a succinct but truthful statement of the history of the spiritual Church of Christ, to the birth of Martin Luther; and the apostasy of the whole Christian world began, as is equally well known, in these attempts of mankind, within and without the Church, to give such an exposition of Christianity as should be conformable to the dictates of human reason, because they would not be satisfied to receive it as the mysterious but conscious work of the almighty and omniscient Being wrought upon the heart. The Saviour had warned the world of the impossibility of this task: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but *canst not tell* whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so *is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" The pride of the human understanding, however, acting with the causes that have been mentioned, prevailed over every caution. Philosophy demanded of Christianity an exposition of itself; Christianity complied; and the end was, the religion of Jesus Christ—the religion of hope, and faith and love—became a mass of intellectual and yet

Digitized by Google

heterogeneous dogmas, delivered to the multitude in an extinct language, and set off with all the pomp and show of a blind and unintelligible worship. Christianity, in other words, was reduced to Romanism, which has subtileties in abundance for the head, and the most liberal supply of indulgences for the body, but next to nothing for the heart, in which vital Christianity both begins and ends by drawing the whole man in obedience to itself.[3]

This general condition of the Church of Christ continued, as has been remarked, to the days of Martin Luther, but not without several vigorous attempts, on the part of good and able men within its own inclosure, to reform it. There was a small number of ecclesiastics in the fifth century, scattered over Gaul, and Spain and Italy, and headed by the celebrated Vigilantius, a man of extraordinary learning, eloquence and piety, who undertook to recover Christianity from the lamentable corruptions which had enthralled it, and to bring it back again to the simplicity of its beginning. But they were met by such threats from the ecclesiastical authorities, and so violently assailed by the publications of the hot and irascible Jerome, a powerful monk of their generation, that they were glad to save themselves from persecution by their silence. Other attempts of the same kind, though on a smaller scale, were made in nearly every century till the birth of Luther. The Nestorians undertook to reform the

[3] The reader of ecclesiastical history must know how faithfully I have followed the great authorities in this rapid sketch of the fall of primitive Christianity: but I wish to add that I have made use of the best works only, particularly of Dr. Mosheim's Commentarii de Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum *passim*, of Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiæ a Mundi Incunabulis ad nostram usque Aetatem Deducta, and of Dr. Cudworth's Int. Syst. of the Universe. These incomparable authors agree in the general statement, that Christianity fell into Romanism by attempting to reduce itself to a merely intellectual statement, the result of which was the substitution of *opinions and ceremonies for the work of God upon the heart.*

Digitized by Google

Church in some respects, but were defeated. Anastasius and his followers inveighed against the worship paid to saints and to the Virgin Mary. The Iconoclasts of the seventh and several succeeding centuries, headed by Leo the Isaurian, were genuine reformers, though enrolled among the heretics by Roman writers; and Clement, an author of distinction, was pronounced heretical because of his attempt to get the Scriptures acknowledged as the sole authority in matters of religion. In the eleventh century, the famous Berenger, the most illustrious scholar of his day, raised a strenuous opposition to the doctrine of transubstantiation and its consequents. Next came, in the twelfth century, the Waldenses, the Henricians, and the Apostolics, who denied the authority of popes and councils, making the Word of God the only rule of the Christian life, and the Christian life nothing but love to God and the human family; and it may be added that the celebrated Arnold of Brescia, and the Petrobrussians, maintained the original spirit and purpose of the Gospel. The thirteenth century is memorable, in church annals, for the rise of several orders of professing Christians—the Fratricelli of Italy, the Beguins of France, and the Beghards of Germany—who, with kindred principles and intentions, endeavored to reform Romanism of its superstitions, and to restore the primitive import and meaning of Christianity; but they, too, were accounted heretics, and denounced if not silenced by the authorities of the papal Establishment. The Lollards in Germany, and the followers of Wicklif in England, were the reformers of the fourteenth century; and such men as Martin Gonsalvo, Nicholas of Calabria, and Bartold de Rorbach, in spite of some crude opinions, deserve to be numbered among the great lights of our religion in this age, though their names figure but obscurely on the pages of church history. The fifteenth century, which immediately precedes the era of the Lutheran Reformation, abounds with the names of those who, at the peril of all things, labored to

Digitized by Google

restore Christianity to its apostolic character; the ecclesiastical history of this century, as I think, has not yet been written; but the person who will take the time to examine fundamentally, and in detail, the writings of such men as Jerome of Prague, John Huss, Herman de Patra, Paulus Anglicus, Laurentius Valla, Thomas à Kempis, John Gerson, Aeneas Sylvias, John Reuchlin, and the others of their class mentioned but not much employed by church historians, would be able to see both sides of a great and growing sentiment prompting to a reform of religion and the reduction of Christianity to its original purity and simplicity. It was in the sixteenth century, however, as the world knows, that all this preparation came to its maturity, and broke upon the nations of Europe like a sudden light from heaven. The leading idea of Romanism had come to be the efficacy of Christian works. Love, faith, hope, as the cardinal elements of religion, were still retained; but it was everywhere taught that a man could possess and exercise more of these than were essential to his own salvation; and the surplus of holiness of each good Christian was laid up in heaven as a sort of capital on which the pope could draw for the benefit of those of his subjects, whose vices happened to be more than equal to their virtues. This dogma of debt and credit had become the occasion of the most terrible corruption. Not only had the popes made use of these "treasures in heaven" for the purpose of absolving men from the most disgusting crimes, but also in the distribution of papal permits, called indulgences, for the perpetration of enormities of the blackest character. These indulgences had to be paid for; the wealthy men of Europe had maintained a continual commerce with the Vatican in paying up for past sins and in purchasing the privilege of sinning for the time to come; and finally, just before the appearance of Luther on the stage, the reigning popes, rendered greedy by their former successes in this business, or reduced to necesssity by their

Digitized by Google

costly vices, had sent their agents into the principal cities of the Roman nations to dispose of these indulgences to sin at public sales, which were conducted like a modern auction. Luther now arose and rebuked these shameful proceedings of the popes; he even denied the premises on which the right of these papal permits was founded; he declared that no man could do more than what his own duty and necessities demanded; he maintained that no capital arising from these imaginary works of supererogation existed; and the end of the controversy was, after a great deal of angry discussion and threats of punishment, that the reformer came forward with the great idea of "*Justification, not by works of any kind, but by Faith alone on the Son of God.*"[4]

[4] I have said in the text above that the history of the fifteenth century has not been written; and I will now say the same of what has been styled the Lutheran Reformation. That Reformation began away back soon after the papal system began to be established. That system had always its opposers; and the history of this opposition is the history of the Reformation which found its consummation in the days of Luther. There is no topic, indeed, so needy of a complete and thorough treatment as this continual rebellion, by the really pious of every age, against the growing corruptions of Romanism. This, as I think, would be the true History of the Church of Christ on earth. It would include, as an accompaniment, the development of the papacy and all the facts of Romanism; but to make the papacy the leading idea of a church history, and to throw the glorious efforts of the Remonstrants of all ages into the shade among the heretics and schismatics, as is done by Mosheim and every other *Protestant* and *Roman* ecclesiastical historian, is more than the Christian world ought to bear. Our Protestant historians, in fact, have written from the same stand-point as that occupied by the Roman writers; and Mosheim is thus entirely satisfactory to such men as Edward Gibbon. The truth is, a genuine history of the Church would be in general the History of its Heresies, as they are set down not only by Roman but by Protestant authors, for those called heretics by the Romans, who have been chiefly followed by our historians, were the Protestants of their respective ages. Taking these heretical Remonstrants and Reformers as containing the true Church, which, with obvious discriminations, would be consistent with the truth, let a history be commenced by some young man, of

Digitized by Google

Great as were the services of Luther, and of his work, in the cause of Christianity, there is no need of misunderstanding his position. Did he, with all his heroism and labors, recover from the rubbish of Romanism, or from the sacred Scriptures, the true ideal of our religion? Does he anywhere maintain that love is the one glorious principle from which springs every Christian virtue, and on which is founded the whole Christian life? Does he in any work, treatise, or discourse, present love to God and man as the substance of our profession, and make faith and hope, with all their consequents, but the fruit of this universal love? Does he hold, in any single paragraph, that this love, if evidenced by its legitimate results, is the only test of the Christian character, and the only requisite to Christian fellowship? What person, who has ever read and comprehended Luther, will claim either of these things as forming any part of his important work? The world knows that the beginning and the end of Luther's labor was the annihilation of the immoralities of Romanism by the doctrine of Justification by Faith. If man-

sufficient abilities and education, who may live long enough to complete an undertaking more needed than any other in the field of letters. Such a work cannot be made up out of prior histories. The author of it must go to the original sources. He must read the writers of each age, and particularly the controversial writers. The philosophers and scholars of each century will be guiding lights, as they generally live above the superstitions by which they may be surrounded; but they could be trusted mainly as to facts falling under their observation, which, unless favorable to Romanism, would not be recorded by Roman writers. Such a history would include the revival of learning in Europe, the great discoveries of the fifteenth century, and every important event from the apostles to the present day, having any bearing on the preservation and ultimate spread of vital Christianity. There has always been, amidst the darkness, and corruptions, and apostasies of Christendom, a true Church of Christ, consisting of persons professing to love God and their neighbors, without the adulterations of theories and opinions. They have had a great work to do to keep Christianity alive on the earth. They have done it; and now who is there that will undertake to write their History?

Digitized by Google

kind were justified by faith alone, then their works were not laid up in heaven as a capital, from which the pope could draw for the emission and sale of his indulgences; nor could he thus remit past offences; and if this mercenary business were stopped, not only would the social corruptions of the Church be reformed, but the system of popery itself would be undermined. It was this particular tendency and bearing of the doctrine of justification by Faith that Luther insisted on in all his writings; and it was for this reason, and this alone, that he raised against himself the wrath and opposition of the Roman pontiff. "It must at the same time be observed," says Mosheim, speaking of the state of religion prior to the Reformation, "that the divines of this century disputed with great freedom upon religious subjects, even upon those which were looked upon as most essential to salvation. There were several points of doctrine, which had not yet been determined by the authority of the Church; nor did the pontiffs, without some very urgent reason, restrain the right of private judgment, or force the consciences of men, *except in those cases where doctrines were adopted that seemed detrimental to the supremacy of the apostolic see, or to the temporal interests of the sacerdotal and monastic orders.* Hence it is, that we could mention many Christian doctors before Luther, who inculcated, not only with impunity, but even with applause, the very same tenets that afterward drew upon him such heavy accusations and such bitter reproaches; and it is beyond all doubt, that this great reformer might have propagated these opinions without any danger of molestation, had he not *pointed his warm remonstrances against the opulence of Rome, the overgrown fortunes of the bishops, the majesty of the pontiffs*, and the towering ambition of the Dominicans." [5]

Let it be particularly observed, that the fact of Luther's

[5] Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii., p. 12.

Digitized by Google

having taught the necessity of love to the fullness and perfection of the Christian character is not here denied. He sometimes speaks of love as clearly as could be desired, making it the beginning and end of the Christian life; but in other places he makes faith, without any reference to love whatever, the alpha and omega of practical religion; and then, in other places still, as in his sermon Concerning the Sum of the Christian Life, he treats of love, and faith, and works, as the cardinal elements of the life of a true follower of Christ; but he confounds the order of them as laid down in the very passage which he uses as his text: "But the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." The apostle follows the order of nature and of all revelation, putting first the love of a pure heart, that is, pure or perfect love, then a good conscience, which is the consciousness (συνειδήσεως) of this love in our inward being and outward conduct, and lastly faith unfeigned, which springs up and completes the character of the Christian, though all its elements are but the different modifications or conditions of his love. It is true, St. Paul frequently speaks of faith without mentioning the fountain from which it flows; he makes it the *act*, as the Saviour did before him, by which Christ is accepted and trusted for salvation; but he nowhere disturbs the proper order and relation of these two states of mind: "For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but *faith*, which *worketh* BY *love*." Luther, however, is not thus clear. In the discourse just referred to, he says, speaking of St. Paul's order of these graces: "In the first place, he places the SUM *of the whole law*, or that which *comprehends the whole law*, in LOVE;"[6] and, speaking for himself, he remarks distinctly: "To the fulfillment of the law, there must be the whole that the law requires—and that

[6] Luther's Works, vol. i., p. 519.

Digitized by Google

is called charity; and this kind of charity is that which flows forth as water or a stream, and springs out as a fountain from the heart, and is pure, and is *accompanied* with a good conscience and faith unfeigned; and where there is such charity, it is true charity, and the law is fulfilled; but where this charity is not, there is a wandering utterly out of the way of the law."[7] Nothing could be plainer, or more satisfactory, than this statement of the "SUM *of the Christian life.*" But, in the progress of the sermon, the reformer does not follow, nor remember, the order which he had at first laid down; and in other publications, as in his treatise concerning Christian Liberty, he states explicitly, that love proceeds from faith, which he makes the substance of the Christain character: "Thus you see," he says, "from *faith* flow love and gladness in the Lord, and from *love* a happy, willing and free spirit to serve a neighbor spontaneously."[8] He carries his doctrine of Justification by Faith, which he seems sometimes to handle as a hobby, to the very verge of extravagance: "Behold!" he says, "then, by this rule, whatever good things we have received of God, ought to flow from one to the other, and become common; and every one should put on his neighbor, and so conduct himself toward him, as if he were in his stead. For all things have flowed, and still continue to flow, unto us from Christ, who so put on us, as if he himself had been what we are, and from us they flow unto all that have need of them. And hence it becomes me to present my faith and righteousness before God, in praying for the pardon and the covering of the sins of my neighbor, which I ought so to take upon myself, and so to labor and travail under, as though they were my own—for so Christ died for us."[9] There is a touch of Luther's papal education in this passage; it is well known, also, that there were several lead-

[7] Luther's Works, vol. i., p. 518.
[8] Luther's Works, vol. i., p. 29.
[9] Luther's Works, vol. i., p. 34.

Digitized by Google

ing heresies of Rome, and one of her five false sacraments, which he never abandoned; his substitution, too, of "consubstantiation" for "transubstantiation," was nothing but the confusion of popery worse confounded; and it must be owned, that, in regard to the true Christian life, the sum and consummation of the Christian religion, he never passed beyond the double, doubtful, glimmering vision of the blind man, who had received one application of the Saviour's remedy: "He saw men as trees walking." But his greatest lack as a reformer, as a restorer of the true ideal of Christianity, lies in the fact, that he nowhere makes the Christian character, even as he understood it, the test and only test of church fellowship. He complains in many places, it is true, that the Romanists had crowded out love, and faith, and every work of God upon the heart, by their creeds, articles, and traditions: "They are occupied," he says, "with mere wandering and unprofitable *opinions*, or rather, with dead dreams;" [10] and yet, in this respect, he goes right forward in a close pursuit of their sad example. They, for a thousand years, had received into their embrace every man who would set his name to the three creeds—the Apostolic, the Athanasian, and the Augustinian—whatever were his virtues or his vices, his internal state, or his external conduct. The new birth—love, faith, hope—had no influence in his reception among them, or even in his elevation to the highest offices. Let him swallow the three creeds, and attend the ceremonies of the house of worship, and he might be, without scrutiny, as rigid as St. Simon, or as profligate as the Borgias. Luther struggled for the purgation of the moral character of the Christian body; he attempted this by the inculcation (with some want of apprehension) of the necessity of a true Christian life; but the most perfect Christian life, according to his own standard—a life coming to the last line and letter of the command-

[10] Luther's Works, vol. i., p. 528.

Digitized by Google

ment—was not enough to fit a person for admission into the societies he founded. A man might love like John, and have faith like Paul, and possess the hope of the King of Israel; he might be, in fact, by the perfection of God's work within him, an accepted member of the Spiritual Church of Christ; but, before he could be admitted into the Church of Luther, he must, after all his love, and faith, and hope, subscribe his name to seventeen articles of belief, drawn up by the reformer, and known as the Augsburg Confession. It cannot be said, therefore, that the great Saxon recovered the genuine ideal of Christianity, which, under the administration of the apostles, received its members on a profession of a change of heart and life, by an acceptance of Jesus Christ, without the slightest respect to any theory of the work, or system of opinions.[11]

The successors of Luther followed, in respect to this subject, very faithfully in his footsteps. His seventeen articles, technically known as the Articles of Targau, as Luther happened to be in that city at the time of his drawing them up, were enlarged by Melanchthon, at the request of many of the leading reformers, into twenty-eight articles, or sections. It was, in fact, Melanchthon's, and not Luther's copy, which was presented and received at Augsburg; Melanchthon subsequently made other alterations not consented to by Luther; and there came a division of the reformation from this cause, those adhering strictly to the original draft being called Lutherans, and the other taking the name of German-

[11] The reader will be further satisfied of Luther's position in regard to the necessity of subscription to articles of faith by his tract (Works, vol. ii., pp. 339–373) on the Three Creeds; and yet (as in his Colloquia Mansala, p. 385) he everywhere considers a Christian the man who has accepted Christ: "To be a Christian," he says, in the place last referred to, "is to have the Gospel and to believe on Christ." And yet he rejected all Christians who did not, or could not, believe his articles of faith, which he had derived mainly from St. Augustine, and which are substantially the same as those afterward set forth by Calvin.

Digitized by Google

Reformed. Both parties, however, agreed in the two main points: first, that true religion consists in the work of God upon the heart, very much as evangelical denominations now agree as to the importance and nature of the new birth; and secondly, that, though born again, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and manifesting all the graces and gifts of genuine Christianity, no person could be admitted into the communion and fellowship of the Protestant Church, without first putting his name to the one or the other of its creeds. Faith in Christ was not the test of membership; but it was the belief of the candidate in the opinions, or dogmas, agreed upon by the leading men.[12]

Next to Luther and Melanchthon, the labors of Zuinglius and Calvin, by whom the Helvetic Church was founded and established, were held in highest estimation in the days of the Reformation. Zuinglius and Luther agreed entirely in relation to what constituted a genuine Christian; and they agreed, too, that persons acknowledged by them to be the true followers of Christ, loving God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves, as well as bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, were not to be received into the visible Church, until they gave in their adhesion to

[12] The chief objection made by Luther to Melanchthon's version of the Augsburg Articles was, that they conceded too much to Popery; and I think that he had good ground for his opposition. Melanchthon's Augsburg says distinctly: "Hæc summa est doctrinæ quæ in ecclesiis nostris traditur. Et consentaneam esse judicamus et propheticæ ac apostolicæ scripturæ, et Catholicæ ecclesiæ, postremo etiam Romanæ ecclesiæ, quatenus ex probatis scriptoribus nota est. Atque idem judicaturos esse speramus omnes bonos et doctos viros. Non enim aspernamur consensum Catholicæ ecclesiæ, nec est animus nobis ullum novum dogma et ignotum sanctæ ecclesiæ, invehere in ecclesiam. Nec patrocinari impiis aut seditiosis opinionibus volumus, *quas Catholica ecclesia damnavit.*" This is very artfully worded; but, like many similar passages, it means too much. See Appendix Papers in Bower's Life of Luther, pp. 347–351, for the substance of the Augsburg Confession.

Digitized by Google

the creed written out for them by their leaders. The unity of the Church did not consist, according to them, in that love which binds every man's heart to every other man's heart, and all hearts to God, but in their agreement upon a system of dogmatical opinions. They tried with great earnestness, indeed, to come to such an agreement. They met privately; they held public discussions for this purpose; they found themselves entirely harmonious on the only questions which formed the test of church membership in the apostolic era; but they differed in their interpretations of the language of the communion service; and hence, without any other ground, they practically excommunicated one another, Zuinglius refusing to acknowledge Luther as the head of the Reformation in Switzerland, and proceeding to the formation of an independent church.[13] From that time, no man, though confessed to be fit for heaven and an actual member of Christ's mystical body, could be received into the Helvetic establishment, unless he held the same views of the Lord's supper in particular, as well as the Augustinian creed in general, as had been set forth by Zuinglius. Such was the test of membership in the Swiss Church at the beginning of it; and Calvin, instead of relaxing the rule, proceeded to make a more stringent application of it than Zuinglius had intended. Not only did Calvin insist on the candidate's assent and subscription to the Confession of Faith of his denomination, whatever were the life and experience of the candidate, but he went so far as to vex and persecute such persons as were found within the territorial limits of Switzerland, who held opinions in opposition to those which the Reformation there had adopted. His confession consisted of twenty-one articles, written by himself and Farel, a fellow-reformer, which he

[13] For the best account of this famous controversy, see Seckendorf, ii. p. 139. Seckendorf was present; and his narrative is exceedingly interesting.

Digitized by Google

compelled the citizens of Geneva not only to sign, but to swear to, on pain of banishment.[14] It mattered not with Calvin whether the people had professed the general doctrines of the Reformation, or whether they were still Catholics, or were of no religious profession, they must all take a public oath, in the great church of the capital, where he was minister, that they not only believed the twenty-one articles, but would live accordingly. When he found the number refusing submission to him too great to admit of banishment, he harassed them with public rebukes uttered in his sermons, and strove with his might to perplex them in all their affairs and relations to society. He even proceeded further. He would not suffer strangers, or citizens of other countries, to reside peaceably in Geneva, unless they would submit to this ecclesiastical dictation, and give in their adhesion, converted or unconverted, to his articles. He joined church and state in the administration of ecclesiastical discipline, for the purpose of giving it greater severity and strength; and, having made himself the leading man in both, he proceeded in his domination over the liberties of his followers to the most intolerable lengths. According to the registers of the city of Geneva, still existing, four hundred and fourteen persons, male and female, were punished in the two years, 1558 and 1559, for the most trifling deviations from the letter of the faith. One person, indeed, by the name of Berthelier, was excommunicated for the sole crime of saying that he was as good a man as Calvin. And the reformer justified himself in these proceedings. In his tract against Westphal, he says: "If I am to be called abusive because I have held up the mirror to master Joachim, who is too much blinded by his vices, in order that he might at length begin to be ashamed of himself, he ought to address the same reproach to the prophets, the apostles, and even to Christ

[14] Dyer's Life of Calvin, p. 71.

Digitized by Google

himself, who have not scrupled to reproach with bitterness the adversaries of the true doctrine." [15]

Not satisfied with compelling the citizens to swallow his creed, Calvin went so far as to give direction to their reading. Thus, in the Registers for the 13th of March, 1559, all persons are forbade the perusal of the Amadis de Gaul.[16] Neither their consciences, nor their understandings, were left free. Not only laymen, but ministers, on coming to Geneva, must accord entirely with Calvin's articles of faith, or suffer punishment. There was Bolsec, formerly a monk, now a Protestant, and a preacher. But he did not believe in Calvin's doctrine of predestination. On visiting Geneva, at the request of some of the nobility, he preached a sermon in which he dissented in strong terms from this Calvinistic article. By Calvin's consent, and in his presence, the stranger was arrested, tried for heresy, indicted, and imprisoned. Calvin, it was believed, desired to have him put to death; for, in a circular addressed by the reformer to the other leading churches of Switzerland, he says: "It is our wish that our church should be purged from this pest in such a manner that it may not, by being driven thence, become injurious to our neighbors;" [17] and it would be difficult for any man to tell how these two ends could both be met, without executing Bolsec. The supposition is sustained by the entire history of Calvin's administration of the Helvetic Church. He re-

[15] Quoted by P. Henry, i. p. 460, from the French translation of this tract, and by Dyer, p. 127.

[16] Dyer, p. 129; and if the reader will look at the authority here quoted, he will find any number of specimens of the remarkable severity of Calvin. "They who did not come to church were fined three *sols*. They who came after the sermon was begun were censured the first time and fined the second. They who swore by the body and blood of Christ were condemned to kiss the earth, to stand an hour in the pillory, and to pay a fine of three *sols*. He who denied God, or his baptism, was imprisoned nine days and whipped." See P. Henry, ii., p. 114, note.

[17] Dyer, p. 231.

Digitized by Google

ceived members only on their subscription to his creed. He punished them for the slightest deviations from it. He spared not strangers coming to visit the city where he held supreme authority. And in one case, certainly, he did go to the extreme of burning a man at the stake for the simple crime of refusing assent to his theological opinions. I refer, of course, to the case of Michael Servetus, which any one might wish to pass in silence, were it not essential to show, that Calvin and the Helvetic Church never comprehended the true spirit, the beautiful ideal, of primitive Christianity. Servetus, a Spaniard by birth, and descended from a noble family, was a person of great natural genius; and his education in letters, in law, and in medicine, at the first schools and under the most illustrious teachers of Europe, left nothing to be desired. So universal was his genius, that, before he had completed his twenty-second year, he published a religious work under the name of The Heresies of the Trinity, and afterward another called the Restoration of Christianity, in which he expressed opinions decidedly opposed to the orthodoxy of the Reformers. The positions of his first production he subsequently retracted; but, though nothing was alleged against his private character or conduct, he was, after many years, and by information furnished by Calvin, arrested by the officers of the Inquisition at Vienna, and tried for heresy. He had long resided there in the peaceable pursuit of the medical profession, living in the palace of the archbishop, and enjoying the confidence and esteem of the whole city. He had been, however, a confidential friend and correspondent of Calvin in his earlier days; and he had offended him by certain letters addressed to him, as well as by certain manuscript notes appended to a copy of Calvin's Institutes, which he had forwarded to the Reformer at Geneva. Dreading the resentment and treachery of Calvin, and justly fearing for his safety in the hands of the Inquisition, he made his escape from the prison at Vienna and fled with all haste into

Digitized by Google

Italy. After spending a short time there, where his ignorance of the language gave him no opportunity of gaining an honorable livelihood by the practice of his profession, he undertook to effect a passage into France, where he had resided as a student many years before. But to get into France, his nearest and best route was to go through Geneva. Here he rested for a short time, and was about leaving for Zurich, when he was apprehended, at the instance of Calvin, and thrown into prison. The accusation, drawn up by Calvin, contained thirty-eight heads, the substance of them all, however, being the general charge of heresy and contumacy in the publication of his opinions. The eighth "*item*," as it is called in the accusation, reveals the authorship and animus of the whole proceeding: "That, in the person of M. Calvin, minister of God's word in this Church of Geneva, he has defamed, in a printed book, the doctrine preached in it, uttering all the insults and blasphemies it is possible to invent." The "printed book" was Calvin's Institutes; and the blasphemies and insults were the notes of Servetus on the margins. Calvin's secretary, by the name of Nicholas de la Fontaine, was the formal prosecutor; but Fontaine was a mere youth, yet a student studying with Calvin; and the real prosecutor was Calvin himself. Calvin conducted the case before the court; and his power in it was, as is well known, at that time supreme. Servetus at first thought it impossible for the authorities of Geneva to carry the affair to extremities against a stranger, a mere traveller passing through their city, for works published in another country, and composed so many years before, when he was but little better than a boy. But he soon learned Calvin and the spirit of the Helvetic Church more thoroughly. It was not long before he saw death but a few steps before him; and, to avert such a doom, he drew up a paper demanding his release on the following grounds: 1st, That it was a novel proceeding, unknown to the Apostles and the Ancient

Digitized by Google

Church, to subject a man to a criminal prosecution for points of doctrine; 2d, That he had committed no crime, or misdemeanor, in the territory of Geneva; and 3d, That, as he was a foreigner, unacquainted with the customs of the country and the practice of the courts of law, he requested to be allowed an advocate for the better management of his cause. Nothing could be more reasonable than this demand; but the culprit had offended Calvin; and Calvin had caught the impugner of his doctrines at Geneva, where his personal authority was irresistible. The release of the traveller was, therefore, denied; he was also denied the benefit of counsel, on the ground, that he was such a heretic, showing that his case had been prejudged; and the result was, of course, Servetus was condemned. The nature of the punishment was pointed out to the court by Calvin, who wrote an elaborate argument to show, that "heresy was made capital by the Roman emperors, and that the punishment of death is not contrary to the spirit of the New Testament."[18] The unhappy man, therefore, who, in heathen lands and in heathen times, could by law and custom have claimed the rights of hospitality as a stranger, was sent to the stake and burnt alive on a slow fire made of green wood: "About midday," says Dyer, "Servetus was led to the stake. Before it lay a large block of wood on which he was to sit. An iron chain encompassed his body and held him to the stake; his neck was fastened to it by a strong cord, which encircled it several times. On his head was placed a crown of plaited straw and leaves, strewed with sulphur to assist in suffocating him. At his girdle were suspended both his printed books, *and the manuscript which he had sent to Calvin*— the causes of his miserable end. Servetus begged the executioner to put him quickly out of his misery. But the fellow, either from accident or design, had not been properly

[18] Dyer, p. 279.

Digitized by Google

instructed in his duty, and had collected a heap of green wood. When the fire was kindled, Servetus uttered such a piercing shriek, that the crowd fell back with a shudder. Some, more humane than the authorities, ran and threw in fagots: nevertheless, his sufferings lasted about half an hour. Just before he expired, he cried with a terrible voice: 'Jesus, thou son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me!'" And now, reader, as you listen to that cry and behold this fearful scene, open your New Testament at any point of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!" No words of mine are necessary to show you how utterly below the standard of the great doctrine of universal love was the temper, under the personal administration of its chief minister, of the Helvetic Church; and if any one, at any time, has a doubt as to how far the Calvinistic Reformation recovered the original ideal of Christianity, let him always examine his doubt by the light of that funeral pile, on which a man was burnt alive for the simple crime, not of an unconverted or unbelieving heart, nor of any looseness or impropriety of life, but of holding *opinions* on theological topics contrary to the twenty-one articles of the Calvinistic faith!"

These two points, therefore—the necessity of a change of

" For a most impartial account of Calvin's administration at Geneva, in all the cases I have mentioned, see Dyer's Life of Calvin, pp. 249–305. The case of Servetus will be found at large in Dr. Mosheim's work, entitled "Geschichte des beruhmten Spanischen Artzes M. Serveto," which forms the second volume of his "Ketzer-Geschichte," 4to. Helmstadt, 1748. But the original documents in this celebrated trial have been published in almost all the European languages, and need no commentary of Mosheim, or of any other author. The facts are too notorious to admit of contradiction; and the mildness of my statement of them will show, that I introduce them here for no purpose hostile to the reputation of Calvinism, but merely to prove, that the primitive ideal of our religion was not restored, nor even dreamed of, by the founders of the Calvinistic branch of the Lutheran Reformation.

Digitized by Google

heart in order to being regarded as a Christian—and the additional necessity of consenting to a creed in order to being received into church fellowship—were the fundamental positions of the Reformation. They were enforced by Luther, Melanchthon, Zuinglius, and Calvin, though Zuinglius was opposed, theoretically, to the use of compulsion in matters not held important. In the propagation of the substance of religion, however, he not only was for using force, but he actually fought for the advancement of his faith, and fell amidst the roar of battle. It has been seen that Calvin employed the most violent means for the same general purpose. Luther and Melanchthon limited their compulsory process to the necessity of signing their articles of confession; and it must consequently be remembered that, in respect to these two cardinal elements of the Reformation, there was some variety in the stress laid upon them by the original reformers. They all struggled, nevertheless, in their respective spheres of action, to build up a reformed and spiritual Christianity on the ruins of the Church of Rome; and their two grand ideas were, that spiritual life which is implied in the proposition of justification by faith, and an absolute unity of opinion in respect to a general system of theology. At first, these two points were pressed with nearly equal zeal; but, as soon as the era of Protestant controversy arose, under the debates between the German and the Swiss reformers, the doctrine of the necessity of a unity of opinion took the lead all over Europe. The necessity of the new birth was still held forth; but the other dogma, as has been shown, was pushed. So heated did the minds of the great leaders become, in the progress of their debates, that they soon nearly dropped, and afterward misunderstood, their own proposition respecting justifying faith. They seemed to confound two words, as well as two ideas, which were not at all identical. Faith was taken for belief; and Justification by Faith was proclaimed as a state of mind based on a recep-

Digitized by Google

tion of the truth. The truth, of course, in any case, was that form of doctrine, that system of theology, which the teacher, whoever he might be, had himself embraced. The original reformers had scarcely gone to their graves, indeed, before the glorious doctrine of Justification by Faith signified simply, that a man was all right, in the eyes of the different church establishments, if he gave in his adhesion to the articles of their creed. It was so over the whole of Germany. It was so in Switzerland. It was so in France. It was so in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. It was so in our mother country, where, at the rise of Puritanism, the only question put to a Puritan heretic before burning him was, whether he would renounce his opinions and subscribe to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. It was so, a little afterward, among the Puritans themselves, and in our own country, when they burnt and drowned the witches, and cut off the ears and whipped the naked bodies of the Quakers, and refused a landing to immigrant members of the English Church, and banished into a howling wilderness the upright and high-minded Roger Williams. The Puritans, however, must have their due. They certainly did, at their outset, remind the world of the more spiritual element of the Christian character. They insisted on that change of heart and life which the fathers of the Reformation included under the formula of Justification by Faith. They accused the people of Great Britain, and afterward of Germany, of having back-slidden from the fundamental axiom, from the very nature and design, of the great enterprise of Luther; and, by pressing the Lutheran view of practical religion, they were the occasion of a decided revival of genuine Christianity. While in England, indeed, they based their movement entirely on the first of the two cardinal principles of the Reformation. They went so far as to make nonconformity to the opinions of an established creed the duty, and the inalienable right, of every individual. But they had,

Digitized by Google

nevertheless, and in spite of all consistency, a creed of their own, which they imposed upon every person proposing to unite with them. They carried this creed to Holland; and it was the rigorous discussion and application of it that characterized and weakened them in that land of their temporary wanderings. They brought the same creed with them to this country; and here, under its various modifications, they not only insisted upon every man's receiving it on becoming a member of their community, but they made it the law of the land, to which every one must yield assent before he could become a citizen. They far outstripped their English persecutors, in fact, in the development and application of the necessity of Unity of Opinion. They contented not themselves, as their English oppressors had done, with consolidating a connection between church and state; but they made their church to be the state itself; and they cut off, by the most violent means, such of the native-born inhabitants as grew not up into their way of thinking, and thrust from them all of every clime, condition, and profession, whose justification, whose religious state, did not consist in subscribing to their theological opinions. And the result was the same as had been witnessed in the older countries. Religion was soon looked upon as nothing but a compliance with a certain formula of faith. It was transformed from a work of grace into an operation, or condition, of the mind. It was transferred from the heart to the head; or, to speak the truth more exactly, it had utterly expired; and a system of dogmas was set up, here in our own country, as had before been done in every other land, to usurp and occupy its place.[20]

[20] Dr. Cooke (Centuries, vol. i., pp. 198–199) says that the earliest record on the books of his parish of Lynn, Massachusetts, consists of the following note: "Voted, That, in case of admitting members into full communion, although the church is far from discouraging a relation of Christian experience, but would gladly receive one, whenever offered, yet they would not insist upon it; but, *instead of this*, that they who desire admis-

Digitized by Google

Such, reader, was the religious condition of the world when John Wesley appeared upon the stage. The primary doctrine of the Reformation had become identical with the second; and the resulting idea, that religion could not exist without a consent to a certain mode of stating it, had nearly banished all genuine religion from the experience and knowledge of mankind. The departure of religion had been followed by an influx of every species of immorality, as the dampness and darkness of night follow at once upon the footsteps of retiring day. All practical piety was discouraged, ridiculed, not only by men of the world, but by the people and pastors of the churches. In Germany, rationalism had taken the place of revelation, and the population had fallen back into every kind and variety of vice. In the other continental nations, which still looked to the common fatherland as also the common exemplar of everything moral and intellectual, an inferior degree of intelligence had prepared the half-reformed inhabitants for a still deeper fall. In England, the population had so lost sight of the fundamental principles of Christianity, and had sunk so low in their appreciation of its value, that a clergyman in the houses of the nobility and gentry was classed among the domestics, and his profession was generally despised. The church was considered, by the higher classes, as a part of the government of the country, a useful means of keeping the rabble in subjection, and a prop to support the royal power, but a farce so far as its ostensible object and occupation were con-

sion into the church should be received upon their *consenting to a confession of faith*, which the church have approved and fixed upon." And the author admits that their vote was according to the general practice of New England Puritanism prior to the advent of Methodism, while every informed reader knows that it was because the great Jonathan Edwards had received and undertaken to apply, in his church at Northampton, the practice and principle of the Wesleys, that, powerful as was his influence, he was rejected and dismissed by the members of his parish.

Digitized by Google

cerned. Historians give us frightful pictures of the condition of religion in Great Britain just prior to the birth of Wesley. "Revolutions," says Southey, "call forth heroic virtue at the beginning, but their progress tends to destroy all virtue, for they dislocate the foundations of morality. Reformed religion had not yet taken root in the hearts of the people; the lower classes were, for the most part, as ignorant of the essentials of religion as they had been in the days of Popery, and they had none of their attachment to its forms, in which the strength of Popery consists. Opinions were now perilously shaken and unsettled. During the anarchy that ensued, new sects sprung up like weeds in a neglected garden. Many were driven mad by fanaticism, a disease which always rages in disordered times. Others were shocked at beholding how religion was made a cloak for ambition and villainy of every kind; and, being deprived of their old teachers, and properly disgusted with the new, they fell into a state of doubt, and from doubt into unbelief. A generation grew up under a system which had, as far as possible, deprived holiness of all its beauty; the yoke was too heavy, too galling, too ignominious to be borne: and when the Restoration put an end to the dominion of knaves and fanatics, it was soon perceived that the effect of such systems is to render religion odious, by making piety suspected, and to prepare a people for licentiousness and atheism."[21] It was this licentious and atheistic generation which occupied the mother country when the father of John Wesley commenced his ministry at Epworth. It was an age of general corruption. Lamented by the few pious divines of the kingdom, such as Burnet, Watts and Secker, the religious state of Britain was ridiculed, and at the same time illustrated, by her satirists and comic poets. A living writer has mentioned the fact, that the people could then read the loosest pages of

[21] "Life of Wesley," vol. i. pp. 271, 272.

Digitized by Google

such writers as Congreve and Dryden without a blush; but those very authors, so obscene and atheistical themselves, abound with the most caustic passages on the immorality and irreligion of their times; and the reader is called upon to imagine, what I cannot here describe, the utter impiety and profligacy of a period which could fall under the ban of such degenerate pens. It is enough to say, that, when Wesley was in his cradle, the Reformation in Great Britain had lost sight of all personal and practical religion, and that this result was the consequence of its having substituted, as had been done before in other Protestant countries, conformity to articles of belief for the regeneration of the heart and a life of faith.[22]

Mr. Wesley saw and lamented this wretched and ominous condition of the Reformation all over Europe. He saw that, while it had damaged the power of Popery, it had not recovered the original character, the primitive ideal, of Christianity. He perceived, too, that if its success had been as perfect as possible, it would have left original Christianity unrestored. The Reformation, and the Christianity of Jesus and his apostles, had not the same ideal. Christ, and his immediate representatives, as has been shown, were satisfied

[22] The religious state of England, at the rise of Methodism, has been well drawn by Dr. Stevens (History of Methodism, vol. i. pp. 19-32), and by Dr. Southey (Life of Wesley, vol. i. pp. 261-283). The history of the decline and fall of the English Reformation, however, can be found only in those larger works, which give themselves the needed scope and space for a faithful and comprehensive statement. If the reader wishes to know exactly the state of religion in Great Britain for a century prior to Wesley, let him read the History of Religion as contained in vol. iii. of the Pictorial History of England, or the lengthy but exceedingly able chapter 5th of Masson's recent Life and Times of Milton (vol. i. pp. 244-325), the most admirable exposition of the subject in the language. Macaulay treats the same topic, but his pictures are not entirely to be trusted. I could refer to more recondite sources, but they would be of no avail to the general reader.

Digitized by Google

when the principle of love took practical and exclusive possession of the heart. The Reformation was *not* satisfied with this, but added to it an intellectual submission to certain articles of belief; and, in this way, it had brought contention, animosity, division, imbecility, immorality and ruin upon itself. John Wesley now rose up and proclaimed the original Gospel—the Gospel that makes the substance and test of our religion to consist in that new life of the spirit, whose other name is perfect or universal love—and dropped altogether the addition so unfortunately borrowed by the Reformation from the Church of Rome. What he looked upon as the beginning of religion, he sometimes called the new birth, sometimes justification by faith, sometimes conversion, but the maturity of the work, according to everything he said, is a full and controlling love to God and man; and, whenever a person possessing this love, and giving satisfactory evidence of its possession, presented himself as a candidate for membership into his societies, no question whatever was put to him by Mr. Wesley in relation to his theological opinions. He taught this generous and genuine catholicity to his followers. In the very first of his published discourses, preached before the University of Oxford at the opening of his career, he describes the nature of true religion as being that spiritual salvation which a man obtains by accepting Christ: "This, then," he says, "is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification;* which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ *actually applied to the soul of the sinner* NOW BELIEVING ON HIM, and a deliverance from the whole body of sin through Christ *formed in the* HEART. So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again.* He is born again of the Spirit unto a new life, 'which is hid with Christ in God.' 'He is a new creature: old things are

Digitized by Google

passed away; all things in him are become new.' And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the ἄδολον, 'sincere milk of the word, and grows thereby:' going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until, at length, he comes unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'" [22]

Mr. Wesley takes pains, in several of his discourses, to distinguish this work of God upon the heart from all systems of belief. He has a sermon on scriptural Christianity, in which he explicitly denies that it consists in "a set of opinions, a system of doctrines," maintaining it to be a work manifest in "men's hearts and lives." He represents it as the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart, producing "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness;" producing also faith and hope; and enabling the recipient "to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, its passions and desires, and, in consequence of this inward change, to fulfill all outward righteousness, 'to walk as Christ also walked'—in the 'work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love.'" "Such," says he, "was Christianity in its rise. Such was a Christian in ancient days." He then wishes to be told where, in all the world, this original Christianity can be found. "Where," says he, "does this *Christianity* now exist? Where, I pray, do the *Christians* live? Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are all thus filled with the Holy Ghost? Are all of one heart and one soul? Cannot suffer one among them to lack anything, but continually give to every man as he hath need? Who, one and all, have the LOVE OF GOD *filling their hearts* and constraining them to LOVE THEIR NEIGHBOR *as themselves?* Who have all 'put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering?' Who offend not in any kind, either by word or deed, against justice, mercy, or truth, but in every point

[22] "Wesley's Works," vol. v. pp. 12, 13.

Digitized by Google

do unto all men, as they would these should do unto them? With what propriety can we term any a Christian country, which does not answer this description? Why, then, let us confess we have never yet seen a Christian country upon earth." This discourse, like the one just mentioned, was preached at Oxford; and let the reader listen to the noble expostulation it contains to the leading characters of the place: "Let me ask of you then," says the author, "in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, is this city a *Christian* city? Is Christianity, *Scriptural Christianity*, found here? Are we, considered as a community of men, so 'filled with the Holy Ghost' as to enjoy *in our* HEARTS, and show forth *in our* LIVES, the genuine fruits of that Spirit? Are all the magistrates, all heads and governors of colleges and halls, and their respective societies (not to speak of the inhabitants of the town) of one heart and one soul? '*Is the* LOVE OF GOD *shed abroad in our* HEARTS?' Are our *tempers* the same that were in him? And are our *lives* agreeable thereto? Are we 'holy as he who hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation?' I intreat you to observe," he adds with emphasis, "that here are no peculiar *notions* now under consideration; that the question moved is not concerning *doubtful* OPINIONS, of one kind or another; but concerning the *undoubted, fundamental branches* (if there be any such) *of our common Christianity*." He portrays, in manly terms, the fall which Christianity had made even at the great centres of it in Great Britain. He addresses the fellows and students of the colleges, founded for the establishment and spread of true religion, as a generation of trifiers—"trifiers with God, with one another," he says, "and with your own souls. For, how few of you spend, from one week to another, a single hour in private prayer? How few have any thought of God in the general tenor of your conversation! Who of you is, in any degree, acquainted with the work of his Spirit, his supernatural

Digitized by Google

work in the souls of men? Can you bear, unless now and then in a church, any talk of the Holy Spirit? Would you not take it for granted, if one began such a conversation, that it was either hypocrisy or enthusiasm? In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask, what religion are you of? Even the talk of Christianity, ye cannot, will not, hear!" He finally calls the attention of his hearers to the grand object of his life, the restoration of primitive Christianity, the religion of the heart and life, whose watch-word is love: "What probability, what possibility rather (speaking after the manner of men), is there that Christianity, scriptural Christianity, should be again the religion of this place? That all orders of men among us should speak and live as men 'filled with the Holy Spirit?' By whom should this Christianity be restored? By those of you that are in authority? Are you convinced, then, that this is Scriptural Christianity? Are you desirous it should be restored? And do you not count your fortune, liberty, life, dear unto yourselves, so ye may be instrumental in restoring it? But, suppose ye have this desire, who hath any power proportioned to the effect? Perhaps some of you have made a few faint attempts, but with how small success! Shall Christianity, then, be restored by young, unknown, inexperienced men? I know not whether ye yourselves could suffer it." These young men, of course, were himself and his associates; he thus modestly tells the world, at the beginning of his career, what he undertook to do; and he states distinctly that the Christianity, the Scriptural Christianity, which he proposed to restore, was that inward work of God upon the heart recognized as the new birth, regeneration, a new creature, whose starting point and termination is universal love.

The possession of this religion of the heart he makes the criterion of a man's being a Christian; he makes it the test,

[24] Wesley's Works, vol. v. pp. 38–45.

Digitized by Google

and the only test, of church membership; for he openly renounces the common practice of allowing "opinions, or a system of doctrines," to constitute either the proof of individual piety, or the reason of receiving persons into church fellowship. The first point of the Lutheran Reformation, therefore, he cordially embraced; but the second point, which the German and Swiss reformers, and all their imitators over Europe, had borrowed from the Church of Rome, he utterly excluded. He taught everywhere, from the beginning to the end of his career, that the same work which made a man a Christian should constitute his sole qualification to be a member of the Church of God on earth; and the evidence of this work, to those whose duty it should be to extend to him the right hand and to receive him into the household of faith, was not his creed, not his views of theological theses, but his life and conduct. "*By their* FRUITS *ye shall know them.*" These were the two points of the Wesleyan Reformation: That true religion is the work of God upon the heart, consisting of love to God and man, and evidenced by faith, hope, and a useful life; and secondly, That the person possessing and evidencing this inward work was to be received into the fellowship of the Church of Christ on earth without respect to his private opinions of any kind whatever, whether theological, speculative, or scientific.

This was Methodism in the hands of the first Methodist; this is Methodism at the present moment over all the world; and there is no point, in fact, on which Wesley and his followers have been uniformly more emphatic, than the rejection and condemnation of the old Roman idea, so sadly exemplified by the example of the reformers of the sixteenth century, of making a man's opinions take the place of his religion. It has been seen what Wesley said, at the opening of his ministry, in relation to what constitutes a Christian character. Let us now hear him say, near the termination of his days, whether the life thus described is not the only

Digitized by Google

qualification to be demanded of a candidate proposing to become a member of the Christian body. In his sermon on a Catholic Spirit, preached in the maturity of his work, he points out distinctly what questions he had to propound to a person before giving the right hand of fellowship; and the position he there takes is a noble one—a position which should cover his name with eternal honor in a world so divided, so cursed, by ecclesiastical disputations. "The first thing," he says, "is this: Is thy heart right with God? Dost thou believe his being, and his perfections? His eternity, immensity, wisdom, power; his justice, mercy, and truth? Dost thou believe that he now 'upholdeth all things by the word of his power?' And that he governs even the most minute, even the most noxious, to his own glory, and the good of them that love him? Hast thou a divine evidence, a supernatural conviction, of the things of God? Dost thou 'walk by faith and not by sight'—'looking not at temporal things, but things eternal?' Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, 'God over all, blessed forever?' Is he revealed in thy soul? Dost thou 'know Jesus Christ and him crucified?' Does he 'dwell in thee and thou in him?' Is he 'formed in thy heart by faith?' Having absolutely disclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteousness, hast thou 'submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus?' Art thou 'found in him, not having thy own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith?' And art thou, through him, 'fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life?' Is thy faith (*ενεργουμενη δι' αγαπης*) 'filled with the energy of love?' Dost thou love God? I do not say, above all things; for it is both an unscriptural and an ambiguous expression: but 'with all thy heart and with all thy strength?' Dost thou seek all thy happiness in him alone? And dost thou find what thou seekest? Does thy soul continually 'magnify the Lord and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour?' Having learned 'in everything to give

Digitized by Google

thanks,' dost thou find it is a joyful and a pleasant thing to be thankful? Is God the center of thy soul—the sum of all thy desires? Art thou accordingly *laying up thy treasure in heaven*, and 'counting all things else dung and dross?' Hath the love of God cast the love of the world out of thy soul? Then thou art '*crucified to the world.*' Thou '*art dead to all below, and thy life is hid with Christ in God.*' Art thou employed in doing, 'not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee?' Of him that sent thee down to sojourn here awhile, to spend a few days in a strange land, till, having finished the work he hath given thee to do, thou return to thy father's house? Is it thy meat and drink 'to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven?' Is 'thine eye single' in all things? Always fixed on him? Always '*looking unto Jesus?*' Dost thou point at him in whatsoever thou dost—in all thy labor, thy business, thy conversation? Aiming only at the glory of God in all: 'Whatsoever thou dost, either in word or deed, doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God, even the Father, through him?' Does the love of God constrain thee 'to serve him with fear,' to 'rejoice unto him with reverence?' *Art thou more afraid of displeasing God than either of death or hell?* Is nothing so terrible to thee as the thought of offending the eyes of his glory? Upon this ground, dost thou 'hate all evil ways'—every transgression of his holy and perfect law—and herein 'exercise thyself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man?' Is thy heart right toward thy neighbor? Dost thou '*love as thyself*' all mankind without exception? 'If you love those only that love you, what thank have you?' Do you 'love your enemies?' Is your soul full of good-will, of tender affection, toward them? Do you love even the enemies of God—the unthankful and unholy? Do your bowels yearn over them? Could you '*wish yourself* (temporally) *accursed*' for their sake? And do you show this by 'blessing them that curse you, and

Digitized by Google

praying for those that despitefully use you and persecute you?' Do you *show your* LOVE *by your* WORKS? While you have time, as you have opportunity, do you in fact '*do good to all men*,' neighbors or strangers, friends or enemies, good or bad? Do you do them all the good you can—endeavoring to supply all their wants, assisting them in body and soul, to the uttermost in your power? If thou art *thus minded*, may every Christian say—yea, if thou art but sincerely desirous of it, and following on till thou attain—then 'thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart.' And '*if it be*, GIVE ME THY HAND.'" Such was Wesley's idea of practical Christianity: but listen a moment longer: "I do not mean, 'be of my *opinion*.' You need not. I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, 'I will be of your *opinion*.' I cannot. It does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear, as I will. *Keep you your opinion: I mine:* and that as steadily as ever. You need not endeavor to come over to to me, or bring me over to you. *I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other.* Only, 'GIVE ME THINE HAND!" [28]

That, reader, was Mr. Wesley's position on the two fundamental points of the Lutheran Reformation. That was his position as a restorer of original Christianity. If you have ever imagined that Wesleyanism, by thus throwing away opinions, beliefs, creeds, lowers or relaxes the claims of God upon us, look again at this lengthy catalogue of the most personal and heart-searching questions. Can any man answer the half of these affirmatively and not be a Christian? But if a Christian, in deed and in truth, why not, without troubling him about doubtful disputations, receive him at once into the family and fellowship of his own kindred? This, at

[28] Wesley's Works, vol. v., pp. 414, 415.

Digitized by Google

all events, was the stand-point of Methodism while yet in the hands, and under the supervision of its founder. He not only taught thus in his public ministrations, but so put himself to record in his private Journal. He was one day travelling without company in his carriage, and there, after serious reflection, he wrote the following statement, which will be found in his diary for December 1st, 1767: "Being alone in the coach, I was considering several points of importance, and thus much appeared clear as the day:

"That a man may be saved who cannot express himself properly concerning imputed righteousness; therefore, to do this is not necessary to salvation.

"That a man may be saved who has not clear conceptions of it, yea, that never heard the phrase; therefore, clear conceptions of it are not necessary to salvation; yea, it is not necessary to use the phrase at all.

"That a pious Churchman, who has not clear conceptions even of *justification by faith* may be saved; therefore, clear conceptions even of this are not necessary to salvation;

"That a mystic, who *denies* justification by faith (Mr. Law for instance), may be saved. But if so, what becomes of 'Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ?' If so, is it not high time for us—

Projicere ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,

and to return to the plain word: '*He that* FEARETH GOD *and* WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS *is accepted with him!*"

This, let it be remembered, was in 1767; and the natural results of this sort of reasoning could not fail to be such as have been witnessed in the quotations from Mr. Wesley's latest sermons. If a man could be a Christian, and not comprehend—nay, even deny the fundamental article of the Reformation, the doctrine of justification by Faith, why

[26] See Wesley's Journal for Dec. 1, 1767.

Digitized by Google

might he not be a Christian, and therefore be admissible into the Church of Christ, who should not understand, or who should deny, every other part of the explanation of the work of God found in the confessions of the various denominations? As the founder of a new religious denomination, why should not Mr. Wesley say to those offering to join him, as Peter said in relation to Cornelius and his household: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized"—that is, admitted into the Church of Christ—"which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Why should he not follow the example of the apostles, and the instructions of his Lord and Master, who, for the very purpose of preventing his representives from holding out theories of his work for the work itself, relates one of the profoundest but most beautiful of his parables: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, *he knoweth not how*—(for the earth bringeth forth fruits of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear)—but when the fruit is brought forth, he immediately putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Why should he not say: "I sow in your hearts the seed; the seed produces its results, *I know not how; and you need not know how;* but, the harvest having come, I thrust my sickle among you, and garner you up among the people of the Lord." Why should he not, on this foundation, say to every person: "If you know that you love God and man, if you manifest your love by your faith—if you show your faith by your works—give me your hand?" If one erroneous opinion, or one set of erroneous opinions, is not inconsistent with a person's loving God and man according to the Gospel, and so being a genuine Christian, why may not another set, or even all the sets together, exist within a man's *brain*, without excluding from his *heart* the work and character of a Christian? Is it,

Digitized by Google

in other words, impossible for a Catholic, for an Arian, for an Antinomian, for a Universalist, to love God and his fellow-men deeply and sincerely, and to live the life of a true Christian, in spite of his erroneous opinions? If not impossible, has any one the right to forbid the entrance of such true Christians, whatever errors of the head they may entertain, from a membership with other Christians? The most orthodox opinions, the clearest ideas of the human mind, must be exceedingly faulty, immature, foolish—like the prattlings of a child or the hallucinations of an idiot—in the sight of God. There cannot be as much difference between the heterodoxy and orthodoxy of men, as between the highest orthodoxy and the absolute and eternal truth. Every human creed, therefore (and all creeds are human), must be more or less imperfect—must be, indeed, as a whole untrue; and no one has the right, certainly, to exclude another from the Church for not subscribing his name to an imperfect and false system of opinions. The thing is as unreasonable as it has been seen to be unscriptural; and Mr. Wesley could not, in conscience, according to his own statement, refuse Christian fellowship to those, who enjoyed the love of God, but whose opinions of theological questions happened to be different from his own: "*I dare not presume*," says he, "*to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical. But* MY BELIEF IS NO RULE FOR ANOTHER."[37] Glorious declaration! the fundamental proposition of the Wesleyan movement—the founder asks only if a man's heart is right with his Creator and his fellow-man—he then leaves this rectified heart to bring the whole man, soul and body, into ultimate and perfect harmony with the ideas and purposes of Christianity, and with the will of God!

But it is asked at once whether the founder of Methodism

[37] Wesley's Works, vol. v. p. 414, Harper's ed.

Digitized by Google

had no articles of faith. He had; they were in substance the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England; these he preached, recommended, and supported with all the ability he possessed; he incorporated them, in an abbreviated form, into the branch of his denomination planted under his oversight in the United States; but he never made them the test of church membership. This is the difference between him and the Lutheran reformers. They, in respect to Rome, proclaimed loudly their right of private judgment, but were as imperious as the papacy itself over their own followers. Mr. Wesley, also, maintained this right of private judgment; but what he claimed for himself, in respect to the Church of England, he freely granted to those who united with him: "There is only *one* condition," he says in the constitution given by him to Methodism, "previously required of those who desire admission into these societies—'a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.' But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practised; Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, and their opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men." This is the condition of church membership, and the only condition, known to Methodism. Whoever stands at her door and knocks, by giving the watch-word of universal love, and showing the tokens that he is truly a child of God, whatever be his opinions, is admitted into her fellowship and communion. But is Methodism entirely careless as to what her members may believe? Certainly not; on the contrary, she is very careful to send each one of them to the word of God for instruction; she takes infinite pains, by preaching, by teaching, by every means, to inculcate such views on all

Digitized by Google

important topics in the Christian system as she has herself adopted from revelation; but she goes no further. She forces no one's conscience; she overrides no one's convictions; she lords it over no one's private judgment. Her members are as free to think for themselves as they were before entering her inclosure. She has succeeded, it is true, in bringing about a wonderful uniformity of belief among her adherents, a uniformity without a parallel in ecclesiastical history, but her success is the success of moral suasion, her victories are the triumph of religious liberty. Her banner is now high advanced over millions of the human family; and it floats over the largest empires, and over many of the islands of the seas; but it bears upon its folds no such motto as that of Rome—"Believe as I do or die the death of the heretic," no such inscription as that of Calvin—"Think with me or burn"—no such narrow language as would have been put there by the least bigoted of the national establishments of Europe—nor any words to have been suggested by the spirit of the old Puritanism of New England. No, no! On one side you read: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.*" On the other, the glorious sentiment: "MY BELIEF IS NO RULE FOR ANOTHER!" This flag, indeed, for the first time raised and maintained since the days of the apostles, holds up before us the true ideal of original Christianity, of vital piety united with intellectual liberty—and this is Methodism!

And now, reader, is there anything—could there be anything—in this world of bigotry and oppression, more grateful to the general population of every nation, than such a system? Do you not clearly see how welcome it must have been, from the beginning, to all persons religiously inclined, as fast as they were made to understand it? Even wicked and abandoned men, the very lowest and roughest classes, who could behold no beauty in its moral character, or in its religious purpose, would not fail to respect it for holding

Digitized by Google

forth the fundamental idea of religious and of civil liberty. There could scarcely be a person so wanting in intelligence, or so illiterate, as not to be capable of comparing a denomination, demanding only piety of its members, with all other denominations, which, either in addition to piety, or to the exclusion of it, demanded to take the management and direction of the opinions, of the understanding, of the private judgment, of their subjects. Men of reflection, of large reading and experience, and of candor equal to their knowledge, must have rejoiced, and must now rejoice, in the advent and progress of a new Reformation, whose basis is identical with that of unadulterated Christianity, and whose general success could not fail to be the liberation of the human mind—not from oppressive laws, indeed, as this boon has been provided for by the English and American revolutions, but from the more rigid tyranny of creeds, articles, and confessions. The character of Methodism, it is true, was not at first generally understood by the world's population; it was, indeed, very widely misunderstood, misrepresented, and accordingly rejected; but as the system was but the body whose soul was an eternal principle, as indestructible as its Author—and that principle the *ideal* of original Christianity, against which nothing can prevail—it survived opposition, it made continual advances, it became in time the most powerful religious movement of modern history; and I now submit it to the judgment of my most thoughtful and liberal reader, whether a work so clearly manifesting itself to be but the restoration of our primitive religion, a recovery of the real Gospel of the Son of God so long lost beneath the rubbish of human dogmas, is not worthy of his personal examination and encouragement, and does not deserve even a greater success than has thus far been given it. At all events, the past is secure; and its friends must look to the future with the same confidence in the immortality of truth which has cheered them forward from the beginning of their movement.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

METHODISM IN RELATION TO THE REPRODUCTION, PRESERVATION, AND PROPAGATION OF THE IDEAL CHRISTIANITY: THE SECOND CAUSE OF ITS SUCCESS.

It must have been observed by careful readers of the New Testament, that, at some times, the great Founder of our religion was free to answer questions put to him by the Jews, and that, at other times, he utterly declined replying to their interrogations; and a superficial student of the Scriptures might, on this ground, accuse him of moodiness of temper; but a more thorough style of study resolves the contradiction in a way to heighten our admiration of the character of Jesus. He came here, according to the predictions of the prophets, and according to his own declarations, to accomplish a work given him of God the Father. He came here for the accomplishment of this one solitary object. We are told by the loving evangelist, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus, therefore, sent here by that Being whose nature and whose name are Love, and being himself the glorious incarnation of that love, came into this angry and discordant world, this world of hatred toward God and man, to restore this lost affection to the race, and make it, according to the original design, the tie of universal brotherhood between man and man, and the tie that should bind again the universe to God. This, without going into theoretical analyses and explanations, which would involve intricate discussions, was his one only work. It was a mission of reconciliation between parties estranged

Digitized by Google

from each other, but who ought to live on terms of the greatest intimacy, confidence and harmony. Under the old dispensation, in every way so typical of that which was to follow, the people of Israel were commanded to make a special offering of "one lamb," which was to have a universal character, covering the ground occupied by all the offerings known to the prophetic services of the temple. It was to be "for a meat-offering, and for a burnt-offering, and for peace offerings," the object of which was "to make reconciliation for the House of Israel;" it was a single offering, in other words, for the entire Jewish people, that they might thus manifest their remembrance of the Lord their God; and it was the offering, too, which contained in it the idea of a future sacrifice to be made for the whole human family. It represented Jesus, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," who, by his death, made the reconciliation of mankind to God possible, and organized the original society of persons reconciled by love to their Creator and to their fellow-creatures. According to his own statement, he came to make atonement for the world; and this atonement, or at-one-ment, is the universal reconciliation before mentioned. This was the work of God in the person of his Son. This was the only work which Jesus undertook to do, and, therefore, when questioned by the Jews, in a sincere spirit of inquiry, in relation to the nature of his enterprise, he always replied to their interrogations gladly; but if pursued by speculative questions, such as were frequently urged upon him by the doctors and lawyers among the Jews, he demonstrated by his silence, or by turning to some practical view of his undertaking, that he had come, not to divide men still further by doubtful disputations, but to regenerate their nearts and fill them with the love of God.

That this work of universal reconciliation, agreement, pacification, between mankind as among themselves, and between them and their common Father, was the sole end

Digitized by Google

and aim of the mission of Jesus Christ, is evident from every view that can be taken of the subject. It is evident from what has been shown to be the substance of Christianity as applied to the human heart. It is evident from the tenor of the Scriptures, old and new, as has been demonstrated by the writings of St. Paul, the profoundest commentator which those Scriptures have ever had: "For if," says he, "when we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God by the death of his Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *atonement*." Reconciliation and atonement, it is seen, are with him identical; indeed, in the original language, they are the same word; and, in our own language, the words have ever been used, by the best writers, interchangeably. In the Greek, the term καταλλαγή signifies the state of agreement brought about by two parties in the making of a covenant, or contract; and this is the term employed by the Apostle in this passage, and throughout the whole of his epistles, to convey the idea of reconciliation and atonement. So Chaucer, in his Clerke's Tale, gives the elements of the common term:

> "If gentilmen, or other of that contree,
> Were wroth, she wolde bring hem *at one*."[1]

In the same way, in an old commentary on this very passage of the Apostle, it is said by Udal: "And like as he made the Jews and the Gentiles *at one* between themselves, even so he made them both *at one* with God, that there should be nothing to breake the *at-one-ment*, but that the thinges in heaven and the thinges in earth shoulde be joyned together as it were into *one* body"—as if that orthodox old English commentator had intended, at one stroke, to settle the meaning of the word representing the work undertaken by Jesus.

[1] Clerke's Tale, v. 8313.

Digitized by Google

and to state the beginning and the end of that work itself. Though it was admitted by the Nazarene, that his religion would, in individual cases, cause divisions between those who received and those who rejected him, he clearly announces the aim and end of it to be "peace on earth and good will toward men." His object was to restore the harmonizing principle to the universe, to remove all discord from it, to make every man a brother to every other man, and to unite all men in filial reverence to God, by filling the wide compass of creation with the pervading element of universal love. This was his only purpose; his theater of action was the human heart; he could spend no time on extraneous questions; he knew that the restoration of the heart by love would carry the whole man, and finally the whole world, with it; and to this end he devoted every hour, and every energy, of his wonderful life on earth. [2]

[2] The historians of our language have collected many similar proofs of the radical meaning of this word. Richardson (New Dictionary of the English Language, in two vols. 4to.) goes back to the age preceding that of Chaucer and gives a couple of quotations, one from Gloucester, another from Brunne, in which atonement and at-one-ment are identical: "Heo maden certeyne couenant," says Gloucester (p. 113) "that heo were all *at one*." Brunne says: "Sone thei were *at one*, with will *at on*' assent." Tyndall, too, whose New Testament and other publications appeared but a little later than the poems of Chaucer, gives this good advice to ministers and professors of the true religion: "That thou be feruent and diligent to make peace and to go betwene, where thou knowest or hearest malice or enuie to be, or seest hate or strife to arise betwene person and person, and that thou leaue nothing vnsought, to set them *at one*." Again (Tyndall's Works, p. 258) "One God, one Mediatour (that is to say, Aduocate, Intercessor, or an *Atonemaker*) between God and man." Tyndall, in this place, is showing that the work of Jesus on earth was a work of pacification, and quotes a note from M. W. Tracie (Testm. of Tr.) a still earlier authority, in which the mediatorship of Christ is set down as a simple work of reconciliation: "That there is but one *Mediatour*, Christ, as Paul, 1 Tim. 2; and by that word vnderstand an *At-one-maker*, a peace-maker." The earliest and ablest of our dramatic writers employ the word *atone* in

Digitized by Google

The immediate disciples and subsequent representatives of Jesus pursued the same singleness of purpose. They "rose up and followed him," one leaving his boat and fishing-tackle, another his seat at the tax-house, and all whatever they had before practised, giving their whole time to the one great labor of preaching the doctrine of universal reconciliation. They were called "the ministers of Christ," and their business "the ministry of the reconciliation." They were styled "ambassadors for Christ," coming before the world with "the word of reconciliation," because this universal pacification was the one end and design of the Christian system: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." This was the enterprise of Christianity; this was the work of God undertaken by his Son; this was to be, therefore, the exclusive occupation of those who, after the ascension of our Lord, were to remain here and carry on the undertaking in his stead: "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And this

the same fundamental sense. So Shakspeare (Othello, Act iv., sc. 1) says:

"*Lod.*—Is there division twixt my lord and Cassio?
Des.—A most unhappy one: I would do much
T' attone them, for the love I bear to Cassio."

So also Beaumont and Fletcher (Spanish Curate, Act ii., sc. 4) make a character to say:

"I have been *at-one-ing* two most wrangling neighbors."

Milton (Par. Lost, b. iii.) advances toward the more modern use of the word:

——— "He her aid
Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;
Atonement for himself, or offering meet,
Indebted and undone, hath none to bring,"

but Dryden (Aurenge-Zeba, Act iii.) returns to the original signification:

"The king and haughty empress, to our wonder,
If not *atoned*, yet seemingly at peace."

Digitized by Google

business they pursued with a wonderful exclusion of every other occupation. Like their Master, they refused to entertain and discuss topics not directly bearing upon the conversion of their hearers. They presented no such topics, no questions of a speculative character, in their discourses. The most of them were men so little educated, that they scarcely knew what speculations were rife in the intellectual world around them; and the only man among them, whose early advantages had made him familiar with all manner of philosophical disputes, and theories, and schools, would never suffer himself to appear to know anything about them. It was this abnegation of himself, of his intellectual attainments, that he refers to when saying that he made himself a fool for the sake of Christ. Whatever he knew, he made all his knowledge to center upon the one only work of reconciling the world to God, by preaching the doctrines of a system of universal love: "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He warns the church against all worldly speculations, making it obligatory on it to receive, without entering into disputable matters, such as God himself had received; "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations—for one *believeth* that he may eat all things—another, who is weak, eateth herbs—let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not—and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth—for God hath received him." God looks not to your opinions, to your agreements, or to your differences, on questions outside of the simple act of the soul in becoming reconciled to him by an acceptance in the heart of his Son Jesus Christ. He has undertaken, by the wonderful scheme of giving up his Son for the sins of the world, to reconcile that world, to bring it into harmony with him and with itself; and this, therefore, is the only work given out from heaven to those who rise up, as Christian ministers, to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Digitized by Google

Such being the single design of Christianity, and such the singleness of purpose among its earliest representatives, it is no wonder that the word of God ran and was glorified. Nor is it anything wonderful that men were "pricked at the heart;" that thousands were converted in a day; that the cry ran all over the country of the Jews: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and that the doctrines of the cross soon shook the foundations of Judaism, and swept like a breeze over the Roman world. To produce such a result was the sole object of the apostles. They turned not aside to any other issue. All systems of philosophy, all sectarian questions, all human speculations, they cast away, or left behind them, that they might unite in the one general appeal: "Behold, behold, the Lamb!" Had they, however, been less single in their efforts; had they given themselves, to any considerable extent, to the task of explaining the work wrought upon the world; had they stopped to dispute with the philosophers, or contend with the sectaries, or to reason among themselves, concerning the intellectual questions raised by their own growing success, the wheels of their glorious movement would have soon ceased to move. They did cease, indeed, in a subsequent age, at that very point when the Christians began to explain, to speculate, to reason, to refute, to make apologies for their religion, instead of pushing its victories by the simple process instituted by their Master of preaching the doctrines of the cross; and it is a historical fact, not to be disputed by any person of common information, that, from that point of time onward through a long series of ages, this one design of Christianity was lost sight of by what professed to be the Church of God on earth. Nor did the earliest reformers, Vigilantius, Huss, Jerome, and Wiclif, restore the practise of confining the propagators of our religion to this solitary work. Nor did Luther, Melanchthon, Zuinglius, Calvin, Knox, Cranmer, and their associates and successors, restore

Digitized by Google

this apostolic practice. Not only did they all hold, as has been seen, that it is essential to put their names to a statement of the theory of their religion, but they acted accordingly, presenting in their discourses to the people, as well as in all their publications, questions which drew off the mind of their adherents from the "one thing needful" to such discussions as have puzzled the metaphysical schools of the past, and will continue to perplex the curious through all future ages.

Nothing, indeed, is better established by the evidence of impartial history, than that John Wesley, in so many other things more enlightened than his predecessors, was the first man, since the decline and fall of Christianity into popery, not only to discard all opinions as elements of the genuine Christian character, but to declare, by precept and example, that the preaching of what is essential to this character—love, faith, hope—a new creature in Christ Jesus—the possibility and the means of being born again and of becoming a child and an heir of God—is the single and only business of a preacher. It is true, Mr. Wesley did engage to some extent in controversy; but he did so only when attacked; and he afterward regretted that he had ever swerved from his original purpose of keeping clear of it. He never turned aside, however, to discuss irrelevant, doubtful, or unessential topics in his sermons. Let any reader run over the titles of those now extant in his published works; and it will at once appear how scrupulously he confined himself, though the founder of a new denomination, to the solitary business of preaching "Jesus Christ and him crucified." His whole life, in fact, was spent in the endeavor to revive in the world, not a set of dogmas, but the life and power of original Christianity. Whether men's creeds were correct or incorrect, he strove to make them, with or without their creeds, religious. On going into a new district of country, he scarcely inquired whether the population generally received

Digitized by Google

the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, or the seventeen articles of Targau, or the twenty-one of Augsburg, or the catechism of the Puritans, or the platform of any of the Dissenters, or whether they denied all these confessions, and swung upon some pivot of their own, or even rejected all forms of our faith whatsoever, he pursued the uniform course of his ministry, holding up before his audiences the sinfulness of mankind, the necessity of being born again, and the steps to be taken in coming out of the darkness of nature into the light of God. He spoke, therefore, with wonderful authority; for he was not disseminating opinions, deduced by ever so careful a use of his powers of ratiocination, in which a person of intelligence will always utter himself with becoming diffidence and modesty; but he was a simple ambassador for God, acting in his behalf, repeating his denunciations, holding up his invitations, and compelling all men alike to look to the present condition of their souls, and to the bliss and retributions of eternity. If a Church formalist sat before him, he called out to him, not to throw away the form, but to seek the power of godliness, and give himself up to the great end of his creation. If a back-slidden Puritan were among his hearers, the exhortation was to rise and do his first works, and then put himself in battle array under the great Captain of his salvation. If a speculating Deist, or even a professed and open Atheist, ventured into his presence, he turned out into no debates on deistical and atheistical theories of the universe, into no dissertations on the false assumptions of Democritus and Leucippus, into no diatribes on the French Encyclopedists and Illuminati, but poured out the most fervent prayers, the most faithful warnings, the most heart-searching exhortations, holding up before his captious auditors, as St. Paul had done among the philosophers at Athens, nothing but "Jesus and the resurrection." This, and this alone, was the substance of what he preached to the scholars of Oxford and

Digitized by Google

the colliers of the northern hills. He preached it to the nobility at Bath and to the inmates of the London jails. He preached it among the domineering inhabitants of England, among the bigoted population of Scotland, and among every class, from the princes to the beggars, of priest-ridden Ireland. His adherents were instructed to imitate, and even to emulate, his example; and the world knows the result of this remarkable concentration of purpose and of effort. Great Britain was shaken to its foundations; creeds, confessions, and systems of opinion were forgotten amidst the throes of this religious revolution; the heart resumed its rightful place as the fountain-head of all the streams of the moral life; and men began generally to inquire into the condition of their souls, into their state of preparation for eternity, because this was the only subject urged upon them by the heralds of this new reform.

Such was the singleness of Methodism in the mother country; and such was its singleness after it had crossed the Atlantic and found a still wider theater for its exertions and its triumphs on our native soil. Though they had come to a land that knew no partialities to the different phases of Christianity, at least where the general law was just and equal; though they might here pursue any organic bias, or constitutional tendency, without the least restraint; the ministry of early Methodism in America adhered most rigidly to the single undertaking of their founder, of reviving Scriptural Christianity, of restoring genuine, heartfelt religion, whose beginning was to be born again, and whose consummation was supreme love to God and love toward our fellow-men. They remembered that Mr. Wesley had regretted what little share he had had in controversy; that he had once apologized for spending fifteen minutes in a private debate about a system of opinions; that he had, at another time, refused to leave his work to receive a call from Dr. Johnson, whom princes entertained with as much pride

Digitized by Google

as pleasure; and that he had enjoined upon all who might choose to follow in his path to preach "the essence of Christianity, and nothing else, in every sermon." Like him, therefore, whom they so much respected for his work's sake, they came to our shores speaking of nothing but how a man might be saved from his sins and filled with the spirit of universal love. To this point they directed every effort. Whoever came to hear them, whether Franklin with his philosophic habits, or Washington from the battle-field of the Revolution, or the soldiers and sailors of the government, or the humblest of our citizens, the theme was always the personal salvation, the present and eternal safety of those before them. At whatsoever point of the human heart the blow was aimed at any time, by any preacher of this great salvation, the thoughtful listener could easily perceive, that everything in the course of the service—the hymns, the prayers, the text, the sermon, the exhortation—was leveled in the same direction. The minister never deviated from his one work to discuss philosophical propositions, or theological theses, or political and social questions. Not denying that there is a field for such discussions somewhere, nor that there are men called to enter into them, they, nevertheless, regarded it as *their* business to concentrate all their energies upon the single work of saving men's souls by the foolishness of preaching. Their word was "*concentration;*" they had but one thing to do; they would do nothing else; to whatever compass of effort, in the pulpit and out of it, as the propagators and defenders of primitive Christianity, their great enterprise might impel them. The conversion of the people from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, was their acknowledged center; and the consequence was, the new world was soon all ablaze by their ministrations, and they were ready to unite with their English brethren in the triumphal song—

Digitized by Google

"See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of grace!
Jesus' love the nations fires—
Sets the kingdoms in a blaze!"

Revival spread upon revival over all the land; error was beaten back; the old order of things passed away; a new order came upon the world; a new denomination, as wide as our empire, and as established as our hills, rose up and stood upon our soil, whose walls were called "Salvation" and whose gates "Praise." Salvation and praise, conversion of the heart and confession of the mouth, have ever since been the one work of every succeeding generation of American Methodism; it has been the one work in England, in Scotland, and in Ireland; it has been the one work of Methodism on the continent of Europe, among the Brahmins of India, among the inhabitants of the Flowery Empire, among the low and degraded offspring of down-trodden Africa, and on all the islands of the seas. It has performed miracles, in a word, in the production of the original Christian character, because the production, preservation, and propagation of this character have occupied its whole attention and employed all its energies. While other denominations have been working out and establishing opinions, dogmas, creeds, and confessions, and through these striving to bring about a reformation of the heart and life, Methodism has struck directly and exclusively at the heart itself, knowing that when this is brought to act solely from the promptings of the law of universal love, the head and the whole man, including his opinions and his habits, will not be slow in finding out and falling into a willing and easy acquiescence with the truth.

Such has been and such is Methodism, the world over, in regard to its power of producing the true, original, ideal Christian character; and it is equally efficient and peculiar in its method of preserving that character when thus produced. The very first idea of the Methodist organization,

Digitized by Google

indeed, as a system of societies, was the preservation of the piety of its adherents. It was this idea that prompted to the formation of its first class; it was this idea that led to the subsequent multiplication of these classes; and it was this idea, ever kept in view, which finally reduced these widely-scattered classes into one general system, and breathed into the whole mass the breath of organic life. Let us bring out this allegation by applying it to a case in point; and it will be seen how admirably the Methodist organization is adapted to conserve the piety of those whom its previous ministrations may have roused into a sense of danger and then led into a consciousness of actual religious life. So soon as a person arrives at this point of his experience, he is not left to wander along his way alone, or to live in comparative seclusion from others who have had the same experience. Nor is he left to find what aid he may from the public ministrations of the Gospel, and from the social means of grace, without some special help. He is at once taken by the hand, and made, by his consent, a member of a class, which consists of twelve or more persons, male and female, who meet once a week for the particular purpose of talking upon the one only subject of their personal condition in the religious life. When he makes his appearance at his class, he is asked to relate the substance of what he has experienced, or at least to answer such interrogations as no man can answer affirmatively, and not be a Christian of the practical and positive character heretofore described. Every week he goes there to submit his heart, his experience, his life, to the same searching examination. Every day of every week is spent under the recollection that, at the appointed time, he is to go and give of himself this strict personal account. He feels, however, that this being called upon to make a verbal statement of his case is a great assistance to the formation of correct conceptions of his real character as a Christian, and that the regularity of this examination, coming statedly once

Digitized by Google

a week, tends to make his whole life regular, methodical, and hence settled and successful. Some of the most eminent Christians of all time, like Edwards and Payson, have compelled themselves to undergo a similar examination, conducted on the plan of answering weekly, sometimes daily, a series of interrogatories which they had previously written down; and some mere moralists, like Dr. Franklin, have pursued the same course of self-treatment; but the member of this religious class, of whom I have been speaking, may not be a person of sufficient strength of purpose, or of the right mental constitution, to attend regularly and faithfully to this work without the aid of an appointment, such as he makes with his fellow-members, for the habitual performance of this office; and he soon finds that the regular duties of the class-room have established upon him a habit of self-scrutiny, which operates not daily or weekly only, but every hour of every day and week. He suffers no embarrassment in the weekly relation of his experience; for he finds that his class-mates are as free with him as he is expected to be with them; they deal in no statements respecting their private affairs, nor in relation to the affairs, public or private, of their neighbors; their only business is to tell, as did the king of Israel, what the Lord may have done for their souls during the week just concluded; he follows along in the same way and spirit, stating distinctly what he feels to be his condition in the sight of God; and he enjoys the advantage of comparing his conscious life with the inward experience of those, who have as little motive as himself for concealing or misrepresenting any part of what has been taking place within them. It is a particular advantage of this meeting, too, that every person in it is a professing Christian, who, as a speaker on the occasion, will have something to relate of the Christian life; and the variety of relations is such, that no one can be long a member, without finding many things stated by his associates suited to his own wants, or throwing special

Digitized by Google

light upon the path that lies before him. If he has a mind for such a thing, he can compare all the experiences together, not only those of an evening, but those of a year or more, and by this large induction, all the while growing larger and wider, may arrive at a very correct general idea of what is regarded as a standard of the true religious life. He may take this standard into comparison with what he finds, in his general intercourse with Christians, to be the common experience of religious people; and with all this preparation, he may go finally to the word of God, and lay all his investigations in the clear and settled sunlight of revelation, and thus, by having first made sure what knowledge he could obtain from the confidential relations of his class-room, he becomes a person of wise opinions and fixed habits in respect to everything vital in the Christian life and character. His piety is all the while growing, because he is all the while cultivating and taking care of it; because he has the aid of other equally experienced persons in the common work of living according to the Gospel; because he has the assistance of those who are particularly acquainted with his wants and deeply interested in his progress; and he grows in piety the faster, too, because he sees it to be the most important question with all of those with whom he maintains this close connection, and the only thing considered of paramount importance in the denomination of which he finds himself a member: for when, as a member of this little band of confidential Christians, he steps into a meeting for social prayer, or attends upon the public ministrations of the pulpit, he sees at a glance that everything said and done points in this one direction; and so he passes along, from week to week, and from year to year, and to the very end of his earthly career, feeling constantly about him the pressure of an atmosphere that forces into him the conviction of the worthlessness of creeds and confessions, but the absolute necessity of a regenerated heart and a life of corresponding piety. He may never once be

Digitized by Google

asked, during his entire membership in the denomination, what he thinks about any opinion, or set of opinions, while he is expected to state, once a week, and with the most perfect freedom, all that he thinks about his personal position as a child of God and a candidate for eternity; and he knows and feels that prevarication and concealment can be of no avail; for his statement, or deficiency of statement, is all the while certain to be compared, by those who know him intimately, with the general tenor of his conduct. So soon, therefore, as any of these members of a class become too cool in their piety, too wanting in love and confidence toward their fellows, for this weekly scrutiny of their religious character, they silently neglect these confidential meetings, and thus expose to their associates, and particularly to their watchful leader, the very thing which they had hoped to cover; and then comes, from all concerned, the needed help —help of every conceivable character—till the fainting flame is happily rekindled, when there is oftentimes as much rejoicing (for I have witnessed such scenes myself) as there could be over the recovery of a human being from death in any of the forms in which it generally comes upon us. Should a person fall entirely away, forsake his associations, and sink into the sins which he had once abandoned, he knows that he is followed, in his lowest disgrace and misery, by the peculiar sorrow of those with whom he was once so confidential and familiar; he knows that his vacant seat in the class-room will never cease to be remembered, that his name will often mingle with the petitions of his old associates, and that nothing will be left untried, in this his hour of desertion and degradation, which holds out the faintest prospect of winning him back to duty and to happiness. So strong, indeed, is the tie that binds together the membership of a denomination, which makes piety, and not opinion, the great object of their pursuit and culture, that they hold one another up in the ordinary walk of Christian life as the members

Digitized by Google

of other denominations would scarcely be prepared to understand; and it so fastens itself upon the heart of even its erring members, that no one of them can utterly discard his religion, without committing a sort of suicide upon every correct and noble principle of his nature.[3]

I will now suppose that the individual, whose career has been imagined, has remained in connection with his class till he has won the confidence of his associates, and proved himself to be a man of genuine and fervent piety; and I will

[3] It is asserted by Dr. Cook (Centuries, vol. ii., p. 36), that more persons backslide from Methodism, notwithstanding its means of preserving piety, than from any other denomination, and he wonders over his own statement. There is really nothing worthy of his wonder. There are, in the same way, more deaths in New York city than in the metropolis of Louisiana, not because it is more sickly in New York than in New Orleans, but because there happen to be more people there capable of dying. Besides, Dr. Cook ought to remember that Methodism is the only denomination, within the circle of his acquaintance, which makes personal piety the only test of membership, and the only one that brings all its members to the scrutiny of this test once a week. In other religious bodies, a subscription to the creed, and one relation of experience at the beginning (and this is not always called for) answers for a lifetime, so that their members may become as inanimate as stones, as cold and stiff as the dead, without incurring the risk of being detected as persons fallen from their religion. In other words, the denomination to which Dr. Cook belongs, as well as others, suffers its backsliders to remain *in* their churches, while Methodism, by its peculiar system, discovers them, and thus drops them *out*. Let all the religious bodies in the world adopt the Methodist plan of bringing all their members to the test of personal religion, and that every week; and then let Dr. Cook take the census of those who should be found unwilling, or unable, to stand this ordeal of their faith. Till then, all such comparisons as he makes are of no account. He might as well complain of the largest flouring-mill on the continent for the extraordinary quantity of bran it turns out; and yet, it would be still better business for him to complain of those less perfect establishments, which turn out little or no bran at all, partly because they do but a paltry business, and partly for the reason that they have no means of separating the pure article from what the French call *canaille*. With them, all goes in and out together!

Digitized by Google

then assert, from the very *animus* of a society which makes this piety the sole test of membership, that, in case a person is looked for to fill a vacant office, he will be at once regarded as eligible to the position in proportion to his reputation for personal religion. From whatever motives, also, such a person might happen to desire promotion, nothing is plainer to his vision than that a strict regard to his growth in the spiritual life is the most certain pathway to ultimate success; and I will leave the candid and thinking reader to infer what salutary influences must be exerted upon the religious character of the members of a denomination, where the places of usefulness and honor are most open, not to men of money, nor to individuals of ambitious views and aspirations, nor to persons whom the outside world covers with its approbation, but to those who recommend themselves by their sincere, warm, and yet unassuming piety. Personal piety having been the test upon which all the members received, as well as continue to hold, their membership, it is nothing more than a natural consequence that they should make this the chief qualification for any particular position to be conferred upon candidates for office; and I shall be frank enough to state, that, from my personal observation for the past thirty years, I know that this has been practically regarded as the leading recommendation for the elevation of private members to official stations, in the transactions of American and European Methodism. No one would say, indeed, that no cold and lifeless members have been raised to places of trust and power in the denomination. Too many, alas! of this character have found their way to such positions; but I still insist, that it is according to the nature of the case, according to the theory and general temper of the body, to advance individuals mainly for their exhibiting the marks of that personal and practical religion, which has been seen to be the center, the very soul of the entire organization; and this fact constitutes a weighty argument for

Digitized by Google

my proposition that there is no other religious body in the world possessing and exerting so manifest and direct a tendency toward the preservation, as well as the production, of original, genuine, apostolic Christianity.

Let us take another step, however, in this important examination. I will now suppose that our hypothetic individual, who has been made a member and then an officer from the leading recommendation of his piety, happens in time to regard himself as called to the office and labors of a minister. How does he obtain this rank in Methodism? Does he assume it and then act accordingly? He may assume it with ever so much boldness or pertinacity, but he must pass through more than one examination, before he can put on the robes of the ministerial order. And what would the reader imagine to constitute the substance of these examinations in a denomination built up around the central idea of personal religion? The candidate is examined by those who know him, who have seen his daily walk, who have associated with him in class, in the social meetings, in the public worship. No persons from abroad are called in, none can come in, to take part in the examination of a stranger; those who put the questions and those who judge and decide from the answers given, are persons who have learned by their own reception and promotion what stress is laid, in the denomination they represent, on the fact of personal religion; they are men who have been thus taught the paramount necessity of piety in the ministry, in the official teachers and supporters, of such a denomination; and then, so careful is that denomination of this point, the questions to be presented have been written out and stereotyped from the beginning of its history: First, "Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation?" Secondly, "Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have they (in some

Digitized by Google

tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding, a right judgment in the things of God, a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?" Thirdly, "Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God, by their preaching?" These, reader, are the three sets of questions to be determined by the examination of the ministerial candidates of Methodism in every quarter of the world. And do you see, or rather do you not see, how clearly they point out the main qualification of a Christian minister? The three classes of questions amount to precisely these: Is the candidate a converted man, possessing a regenerate nature, and a heart alive with the impulses of universal love? Has he the ability to relate what he has experienced, and to set forth the substance of our religion, in a clear and convincing manner? Has he demonstrated the possession of that grace, and of those gifts, by having brought forth fruit, by having become the means of salvation to any of his fellow-men? The three qualifications, in a word, are grace, gifts and usefulness, but the first and greatest of the three is grace; and the reader must see, that from the beginning to the end, from the humblest to the highest position, in a career of private, official and representative membership in the Methodist denomination, every individual is prompted to have his chief care upon that fundamental element of the genuine Christian character by the recommendation of which he was originally examined and received.

This high and severe regard to personal piety is conspicuous upon every part of Methodism; and a candid thinker may conclude, not that too much stress is laid upon it, so far as the private membership is concerned, but that it is too prominent among the qualifications of a clergyman; for the three things demanded of him may be, by a perfectly philosophical process, reduced to one—that Christian experience, from which the remaining two proceed, or in obedience to

Digitized by Google

which they act; nothing is said here about the qualifications derived from education; and history has been brought to show, that Methodism has always rested its cause mainly upon the exertion of such powers as God's converting grace has chanced to find, to develop, to employ, in the hearts and heads of those it has sent forth to preach. Now then, so far as this is so, let us admit the fact; but let us at the same time look deep enough into the very nature of the Wesleyan movement, to know how to justify it for reposing so much confidence in an average amount of native ability of mind, acting under the influence of a conscious experience of the work of God wrought upon the heart. When this man of God, this truly converted minister, this herald of Scriptural Christianity, according to the definition of it given by Mr. Wesley, goes forth into the field, what does he profess, what does he undertake to do? Does he go out to teach philosophy, natural or metaphysical? Does he go out to teach mathematics, pure, or as applied to mechanical forces, or to the heavenly bodies? Does he go out to teach language, or literature, or science in any of its various departments? Does he go out to teach a theory, whether material or intellectual, whether as a disciple of Leucippus or of Dr. Cudworth, of this general frame of being called by us the universe? Does he go out, indeed, to teach any system or the part of any system, excogitated and established by human reason? Does he not go out, on the contrary, to read the philosophy, the mathematics, the language, the literature which he finds plainly written down before him, and to declare the substance of what all these things signify by relating the testimony of his own heartfelt experience? Does he not go out, in other words, to teach the possibility and then the fact of this personal religion, which constitutes the fullness and the fulfillment of the whole law of God, and which he has found, by a conscious reception of it, to be the one thing needful? He does not go out, according to the

Digitized by Google

Wesleyan theory of preaching, to explain, but to state it. He goes out, not to analyze, but to offer it. If any one inquires how it is that he was once a sinner, benighted, wretched, and looking forward with distress to nothing but a continuation of his misery, and yet now leaps for the joy of what he feels within him, he answers with the man whom Jesus healed of his blindness, and whom the Jews vexed with the same irrelevant interrogatories: "*I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I* WAS *blind,* NOW *I see.*" He stands before his congregations as a living demonstration, or as St. Paul would call him, a living epistle, known and read of all men, and calls them to behold in himself what God is endeavoring to do, and there and then has it in his mind to do, for every one of them: "Come and hear," he exclaims, with the pious king of Israel, "all ye that fear God, and *I will declare* WHAT HE HATH DONE FOR MY SOUL!" His work, indeed, is very simple. It is not to expound the theory, but to state the fact, of the salvation which is by Jesus Christ. It is not to explain the mysteries of earth and heaven—the mystery of the Godhead—the mystery of the Incarnation—the mystery of the Atonement—the mystery of Justification by Faith—nor any other of the mysteries of godliness lying beyond the reach of the human faculties—but to repeat a truth, which, whatever be the explanation of it, he knows has had its demonstration in his own heart and life. According to his view, Christianity is not a system of opinions, to be addressed to the intellect and enforced by human reasons, but a system of facts—facts derived exclusively by revelation, and presented solely upon the authority of God—capable of the highest possible demonstration by individual experience. It may indeed be called a science, and the science of all sciences; but it is a practical science—a science based on observation and experiment—the proof of which lies in testing it. Precisely, therefore, as a chemist, after stating that the mixing of certain elements, or the per-

Digitized by Google

formance of certain conditions, will produce a specified result, submits his statement to the test of an experiment by way of proof, so does the preacher, when he has declared what is wanted and how the desired end is to be obtained, as laid down in the word of God, declare in the language of revelation: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." He may, indeed, like the man of natural science, say that the end proposed has been promised on the authority of God; and that the mode of attaining it has been proved by the trial and success of many persons in different countries and in various ages of the world: he may thus produce a strong conviction upon his hearers of the truth of what he declares can in this way be done; he may proceed to give greater strength to this conviction by stating that he has tried the experiment for himself, calling upon them to behold in him what Christianity can do for them; but, after all, like that same natural philosopher, he finally brings out all the instruments necessary for the occasion, and then warmly exhorts those listening to his discourse to make the trial of the truth of Christianity in their own persons and on their own behalf. He thus makes religion a practical affair, like every other matter admitting of this class of proof. He takes it from the hands of speculative theologians, who would show what it must be by *a priori* arguments, or by applying the syllogism of logic to premises assumed, and hands it over to those, who, in the spirit of all real science, establish all propositions capable of such treatment by the evidence of observation and experiment. Methodism, in a word, not only follows the example, the precept, and the spirit of original Christianity in this department of its work, but it is, on the severest examination, the much-vaunted and justly celebrated system of the Baconian philosophy applied to the theory of preaching; and it is this fact, so long neglected to be observed, which justified its founder in laying such stress on grace, gifts and fruit—all of them the elements of a genuine

Digitized by Google

experience of personal religion—as the paramount qualifications for the ministerial work. Almost any person of good natural sense, whose soul had been converted, and whose life was changed, could go out and state the fact; he could relate his experience while passing through this conversion, this fundamental change, as a demonstration of the truth and reliability of what he said; he could look around him, perhaps, and certainly go back to the records of the Church, and gather up numerous and even conspicuous examples of what he testified to himself; he could then easily show, if he could read his mother tongue, that his own experience, and the experience of all the witnesses he had adduced, was precisely such as is promised in the word of God, and such as is there illustrated by the most pertinent cases in point, from the call of Abraham to the conversion of St. Paul, and from St. Paul through the entire period of the great apostolic revival, which rolled like a wave of glory over the Roman world. The very first conversion occurring under his ministry would be an ocular demonstration of what he taught, by far outweighing all the arguments, which all the philosophers and all the speculative theologians could devise; and as these proofs multiplied, the force of his style of teaching the Gospel would grow, till, like an overflowing river, it would sweep everything before it.

Nothing, indeed, is more simple, and nothing more powerful and overwhelming, than the business of teaching Christianity by knowing nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified; by reaching the head and habits of mankind by going through the heart; by ceasing to explain and expound what is absolutely above and beyond all human comprehension; by cleaving to the simple and intelligible declarations of the Bible; by being able to say that you know and feel the truth of those declarations by your personal experience; and by calling upon the world, not to wrangle about the possibilities and probabilities, the nature and relations, the

Digitized by Google

causes and consequences of things revealed, nor to dispute *how* and *why* things are as they are stated in the books of revelation, but to receive them as facts given to us from heaven, and which we may all bring to the *argumentum crucis* of observation and experiment, by which we test the declarations of every other science. Were it the preacher's business, I admit, to take the opposite course in his ministrations—to reach the heart and life entirely through the intellect—to rouse mankind to put faith in Jesus Christ by giving them a true theory of the universe, in which the character, relations and obligations, personal and reciprocal, of God, the individual, and the family of creation throughout earth and heaven must be clearly and comprehensively set forth—to show by irrefragable logic in what manner and for what reasons these three beings, God, man, and the universe, so stand together, by the laws of their existence, before and after the fall, and throughout both dispensations, that all the statements of a certain creed, or confession, or catechism, must be undeniably correct, and may be, therefore, pressed upon the human understanding for reception and assent prior to being acknowledged as a true and worthy follower of Jesus Christ—then, indeed, a minister must not only be as learned as any of these denominations have demanded, but more intelligent than it is possible for any man to be. If this is the true theory of preaching, then the poor fishermen of Galilee, and nine-tenths of their successors for two or three centuries, must have had a sorry time in the work which they undertook. If arguing and defending the propositions of a modern creed, like that of Luther or of Calvin, is the genuine work of preaching the Gospel, then Jesus made a sad mistake in addressing himself so incessantly to the uncultivated masses of Judea, who, in their ignorance, would not have been capable of comprehending the literal signification of one article in ten, to say nothing of the arguments in proof. In that case, too, he made a yet sadder mistake in

Digitized by Google

calling upon Peter, and John, and James to quit their nets, and take up the profession of expounding a system, particular and complete, of universal truth. Such, however, is not the true theory of preaching. Ministers are nothing but witnesses before a court. Christ, as a teacher of human salvation, is on trial; his system is under examination; the court is the human family; and the clergyman stands up, as St. John expresses it, to state what he has known and seen: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen;" and it was only in this view of the case that St. Paul was justified in making himself "a fool for Christ's sake"—that is, refusing to know anything but "Jesus Christ and him crucified"—which every sane man, with a very moderate share of natural talent and intellectual cultivation, may both know and do.

This, at all events, was Mr. Wesley's view of the theory of preaching; the great qualification, he thought, for the work of the ministry, is the minister's own conversion; and it was by thus following what he looked upon as the example of original Christianity, of the apostles and of Christ himself, that he regarded it possible for men of good sense and of a sound experience to do efficient ministerial service by going forth and declaring what, as the Lord's witnesses—"ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord"—they have felt in themselves, beheld in others, and read of in the pages of revelation. It was by this process, too, let it be distinctly seen, that he made the best possible provision for preserving that piety, that personal religion, that ideal Christianity, which constituted the soul and center of his movement; for it has been observed, not only that every member of the denomination is received on the basis of his piety, and every officer of it recommended to elevation by the same qualification, but that every minister, from the preacher of a circuit to the superintending bishop, is raised to his position by those who understand that personal religion is the fundamental principle of

Digitized by Google

their system. That system, too, not only receives and promotes men on this ground, but it is a system of the strictest surveillance over the continued piety of every individual connected with it, the members being all required to state their experience weekly before the leaders of their classes, the leaders being under the constant supervision of their preacher, the preachers having to undergo a strict examination once a year before their bishop, and the bishops themselves standing up, every fourth year, to give account of their religious condition, as well as official acts, in the presence of the assembled representatives of the entire denomination. If Methodism, therefore, is an efficient organization for the production of ideal Christianity, as I have endeavored to prove true, may I not now affirm, that it surpasses all religious bodies in its provisions for the preservation of that ideal?

With a feeling of some confidence, that the intelligent and candid reader will not find it in his heart to deny this conclusion, nor in his knowledge much support to a denial coming from any quarter, I will proceed to establish, if possible, the third and final position of this chapter, that Methodism is also the best existing system for the propagation of what has been shown to be the essence of Christianity; and, for the purpose of keeping the several arguments to be employed distinct to the eye of the reader, as well as clear to his understanding, I will indicate the successive steps taken in the discussion by numeral figures; for I am solicitous that, when the facts and reasonings of the case are finished, there shall be left no want of any perception of my meaning, nor, if that may be, any rational doubt of what I propose to show.

1. Time has already been taken to state that Methodism employs only an experienced ministry—a ministry possessed of the heartfelt piety, of the personal religion, which it was organized to inculcate; and it has been seen how the para-

Digitized by Google

mount regard paid to this ministerial piety exerts a conservative influence on the piety of the entire denomination; but now we are to go out into the world and behold what a power it confers upon the heralds of this salvation in their efforts for the conversion of their fellow-men. It is obvious to every one, that, if a man wishes to water his garden, he must carry out water for that purpose; or, if he desires to burn anything, that he must carry with him fire. Such is the nature of all human labor; and it is equally reasonable to assert that a minister, who goes into the world to convince men of the truth of Christianity, or to make men Christians, can do nothing better than to take with him a specimen of what he proposes to accomplish. As it is his mission to persuade mankind to accept of Jesus Christ as their personal Redeemer, as their Redeemer from sin and misery, as the only means of present and eternal happiness, it would be well for him, if he could do no better, always to have with him an eminent example of his doctrines—the example of a man who had accepted of Christ and had been thus transformed from wretchedness to a high state of felicity—that he might, as the conclusion and demonstration of every sermon, say to his auditors: "Here you have before you a living proof of everything I have asserted about the supernatural, the miraculous, the wonderful virtue there is in Christianity to make every individual of the race happy. See! he that was once poor now feels rich, being made, as he thinks and feels, 'an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.' He that before was in that distress, which always attends doubt, now 'knows that he has passed from death unto life,' and that his life 'is hid with Christ in God.' He that before was separated from all the world, and from his Creator, 'by an evil heart of unbelief,' now rejoices 'as a child of God,' and is joined to every human being by the tie of universal love. Nothing now depresses, nothing now throws him down. He stands erect in trouble, he exults in affliction, 'in everything giving

Digitized by Google

thanks.' I found him degraded by vice, profane in speech, without principle in his dealings, corrupt and corrupting in his example, and avoided, shunned, dispised, by every honest citizen. I present him to you a new man, another being, with his vices replaced by virtues, most reverent and captivating in his conversation, a paragon of honorable conduct in all things, exerting the most salutary influence upon his associates, and welcomed as a benefactor and a blessing by all who have the happiness to know him. This glorious reformation, this revolution of his nature, has been produced in him, as he says, and as I believe, by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God according to the Christian system. He is a trophy, a monument, a represntative of that religion which I am come to publish. Ye, then, now in doubt, in sin, in wretchedness, who have a desire to be rendered happy—and this is the universal desire of man—bow at the feet of that Redeemer, by whom he has been thus washed, thus renewed, thus clothed with the beautiful garments of life and immortality, and become what he is!" Would not this be effectual preaching? And yet the auditors, with whatever admiration they might receive so pertinent an appeal, could scarcely fail to turn round to the preacher and inquire why he had not himself pursued the course which he so urgently recommended them to take. With what additional force, therefore, with what irresistible power, would that messenger of God continue and consummate his argument, could he truthfully reply: "Right! my respected fellow-mortals. Your demand is just. Precisely so far as I do not, or may not, demonstrate to your charity that I have followed the advice I give, so far you are at liberty, from the nature of things, to judge me wanting in sincerity and hence a standing argument against the system which I profess to advocate. But, blessed be the Author of this salvation! I feel that its fullness is now reigning over the affections of my heart. I am myself a new creature in Christ Jesus. Once I was lost, and wretched, and

Digitized by Google

undone. Now I am a member, through love and faith, of that glorious household, which occupies and is to occupy the universe, and whose head is no less than the everlasting God. The great question of my life is settled—it is settled for time and for eternity—the settlement of it brings me a peace and joy beyond the reach of human language—my immortality has begun below; for I feel that the faith, by which I accepted Christ, has indeed become to me, according to the apostolic declaration, 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' and the life that I now live is so full of comfort, so replete with happpiness, that I shall be satisfied if it only continue of the same kind, however it may alter in degree, through the ages of eternity. I know that Christianity is true; that it is the means of the most perfect renewal of our nature; that it is the source of the highest possible enjoyment; for I am myself, by the goodness of God, a monument of this saving grace, of this wonderful system of recovery, and as happy every moment as I can have a wish, or think it possible for a man to be. Come, then, ye that are weary and heavy-laden; come ye seekers after worldly pleasures; come ye rich and ye poor; ye bond and free—ye of every race, and clime, and country come—and be as I am, satisfied with the joys of this living life, which I know has come to me from this system of religion which I preach, from the glorious Gospel of the Son of God."

This, most certainly, would be the perfection of preaching the great doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ. It was as certainly the method pursued by the earliest heralds of the cross. This, too, is the Wesleyan method. Creeds, confessions, articles, theories, and systems of opinion, have no prominence, if they even have a place, in this style of propagating the Christian character, in this mode of reducing the world into obedience to God. The advantage of it is, that it keeps constantly before the eye of the hearer what is considered by it as the essence of Christ-

Digitized by Google

ianity; no side issues are created by it; no controversies can legitimately come out of it; its force is maintained by its presenting but a single topic to the mind; and the power of it is absolutely overwhelming when the living demonstration of the truth of our religion is known to assert only what he is admitted personally to possess. It does not, by making this personal experience of the preacher a necessary qualification, reject the assistance of other qualities. It rejects nothing which gives a man character and influence with his fellow-beings. It rejects not social position, nor family connections, nor the assistance of human learning. It would permit, nay, it would encourage the minister, to covet all of the best gifts within his reach. It would encourage him to be as profound as Aristotle, as learned as Salmasius, as eloquent as Cicero. It would encourage him to *separate himself*, like Solomon, *and to seek and intermeddle with all wisdom;* for "knowledge," as the wise man had said before the days of Bacon, "increaseth strength;" but neither philosophy, nor literature, nor science, nor eloquence must be suffered to take the place of that personal experience of the power of God upon the heart, which constitutes the fundamental qualification for the ministerial work.

The difference between Mr. Wesley and the religious organizations of his day, in respect to education, has been very decidedly misrepresented. The difference, truthfully stated, was simply this: that the contemporary establishments REQUIRED *learning* and RECOMMENDED *piety* in their ministers, while Mr. Wesley, on the contrary, REQUIRED *piety* and RECOMMENDED *learning*. Without learning, Mr. Wesley thought a man of real experience in religion might do a great deal of good in proclaiming the necessity, possibility, and power of this experience; for his testimony, uttered from a feeling heart and in tolerable diction, would have its weight with many persons; but he also held that a clergyman of the deepest erudition and of the most marked

Digitized by Google

accomplishments, without a personal knowledge of religion, would be nearly worthless in the ministry, as his conduct in not having accepted of Christ in his own heart and life would operate as a constant contradiction to the appeals he might make to others. Mr. Wesley believed precisely as St. Paul had taught, that a minister might "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," and might "speak with the tongues of men and angels," but if he had not charity—that love to God and man which constitutes the substance of personal religion—he would be, so far as success in the great work of saving sinners is concerned, but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." He therefore revived the apostolic practice of employing only religious persons, whether learned or unlearned, in the propagation of religion; he preferred men of cultivation, if they had also piety, insisting that all his associates should be industrious in the acquisition of knowledge pertinent to their profession; and some of these associates, as has been seen, became the profoundest scholars of their generation, while a large body of their successors have followed successfully in their footsteps; but, at the same time, there never has been a day, since the laying of the corner-stone of Methodism, that a person of the greatest eminence in every intellectual quality and accomplishment, though he were a Bacon in genius, a Bentley in erudition, and a Webster or Pitt in eloquence, would be received or licensed as a minister without giving satisfactory proof that he enjoyed that religion which he undertook to teach; and the result of this paramount respect to personal experience is to be seen in all quarters of the world.[4]

[4] It is admitted by every candid historian of Britain, that, at the appearance of Mr. Wesley, personal religion in the ministry was very generally disregarded; and we have seen Mr. Wesley taxing the officers and students of Oxford with this want of piety in themselves and in the ecclesiastic order of their country; while it is well known that a similar looseness prevailed throughout the continents of Europe and America.

Digitized by Google

2. If, now, my reader will look steadfastly for a few moments upon this idea of making personal religion the central principle of a denomination, and so much so that neither a member can be received, nor an officer elected, nor a minister employed, without proof of the existence of this piety being required and furnished, he will see how the same idea lays the basis of its ministerial system. It is known in the ecclesiastical world as the itinerant plan of propagating Christianity; and its opposite is the plan of settling a minister over a congregation for many years, or for life. These are the two modes of the ministerial work, and the only two which have divided the practice of the general Church of

It prevailed, according to the confession of Dr. Cooke (Centuries, vol. i., pp. 208–223) even among the Puritans of New England. He gives the case of the settlement of the Rev. Obediah Parsons over the Congregational church in Lynn, Massachusetts, when it was known by some of the official members that he was under suspicion of adultery. "The suspicions," says Cooke, "as to Mr. Parsons' habits were then not unknown, for he had been dismissed from Gloucester by a council, which had acted on such suspicions;" and this writer goes on to relate with what indecent levity the sin in question was referred to by some of the prominent members of his parish: "Some years ago," he says, "an aged member of this church, now dead (David Walker) informed me that, in his boyhood, he heard between two neighbors living in Market street a conversation to this effect: 'Are you going to get that Parsons to preach here?' 'Yes.' 'Don't you know that he is an adulterer?' 'Yes; *and that is one motive which I have in getting him!*'" Even at an earlier period than the settlement of Mr. Parsons, as far back as 1720, "there had been," says Dr. Cooke, "an abatement of the original zeal of the Puritans, the tone of general religious life was depressed. And compared with the stricter morals that obtained in the first generation, when most of the people were Christians, and eminently such, there had been an alarming incursion of immorality." It was this immorality, this fall of Puritanism, that had prepared it for the reception of immoral ministers, provided they were only, like Mr. Parsons, men of good education. See Centuries, vol. i., pp. 178–179. I refer to Dr. Cooke because he is the acknowledged champion of New England Congregationalism, and, therefore, a good witness against himself.

Digitized by Google

God on earth; and it must be plain to the thinking man that these two modes grow directly out of their corresponding theories of preaching the Gospel, whether through the head to the heart, or through the heart to every other department of the man. If the work of preaching the Gospel implies, that the preacher has a system of opinions to inculcate and defend; that he has a creed or a confession, consisting of a series of profoundly intellectual propositions in relation to the most recondite topics with which the human faculties have connection or intercourse to establish; then there can be no doubt that he ought to be an established minister, living in the same place and ministering to the same people for a great length of time; for, in that case, he is the teacher of a school, rather than a propagator of the Christian life; and his enterprise will demand, not only the labor of a lifetime under the most favorable circumstances, but often require more and more opportunity as he seems to be approaching some reasonable termination of his labors. Confessions, creeds, opinions, are very debatable matters; and the propagator of opinions will frequently discover that his most successful demonstrations are at once followed by a new set of popular doubts. The whole work is a work of time; and it will not be expedient, as a general thing, to make frequent changes of the minister, lest the exact position of the pulpit suffer a change also with every successive occupant. The audience, which constitutes the popular party to the debate, would not fail to notice all such changes of clerical position; they would notice the shades of difference between every argument advanced by one minister and the arguments of his predecessors; if they had been met and mastered by one clergyman, the work would have to be done over again by the next one; and, in the absence of the preceding minister, or ministers, they might cite his or their authority against the positions or arguments of any actual incumbent. The discussion, in fact, must be a lengthy and tangled one at

Digitized by Google

best, in cases where the ministerial side of it should be managed by the same man for a great many years together; and it would be absolutely endless if carried on by a great variety of clergymen following each other at short intervals of time. Socrates spent many years in the work of establishing a system of opinions among his fellow-citizens at Athens; and he was followed in the labor by his disciple, Plato, who professed only to repeat the propositions, arguments and illustrations of his master; but he did not live long enough, though his life was quite protracted, to see his master's system received to any great extent among his countrymen; while the first emission of his own writings had scarcely obtained a general circulation, before the system he had adopted and defended had divided, even at Athens, into as many sects as it had raised up distinguished advocates. Could Socrates himself have remained, he might, I think, in the course of six or seven generations, have converted the greater part of his Athenian fellow-citizens capable of understanding him, to his opinions, and thus established a sort of supremacy for his system: but a single life-time is a very short period, whether in the purely philosophical department of reasoning, or in that kind employed by theologians, which is partly philosophical and partly scriptural, for the settlement of any system of opinions, if such a system can ever be, indeed, entirely established. One thing is certain, however, beyond a question: that the theory of preaching which makes it necessary to inculcate a creed, rather than propagate a life, not only requires time, but requires the settled policy of a setted and long-abiding ministry.

If, on the other hand, as I will now proceed to show, the leading work of the clerical profession is to state facts received and to be received upon the authority of revelation, and to state and illustrate an inward life and character consistent with those facts, the work of a minister is a very rapid thing, permitting him, like the apostles in the spring-time of

Digitized by Google

the church, to fly from city to city and from region to region, in the shortest possible time "setting the kingdoms in a blaze." He goes to propagate, not opinions, or systems of opinion, but personal religion. He has no subtile arguments to make; he has none to refute; he goes out to proclaim salvation from sin through "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." He goes into the world bearing fire; his business is the setting of fires in the regions and countries where he moves; and when any fire is set, he puts over it a watch, then flies elsewhere to start another, and so onward to the end of his career. When he sees, in any place, a pile well ignited, beyond the probability of going out or of being scattered by the enemy, he does not remain there to lecture and reason on the nature, qualities, offices, uses, and history of fire; he does not tarry, in other words, to teach the philosophy of fire, *how* and *why* it acts as it does, or *how* and *why* it came to be what it is, or *how* and *why* it came to be at all; he permits everybody to make up his own opinions on all such speculative questions; and he rushes forward in the single employment which he has undertaken to pursue. His ministerial brother of the other mode of preaching may go to a place and try to light up a conflagration by stating and defending a series of propositions about fire; for this is the general course adopted by him; he, on the other hand, gathers up a heap of combustible materials and then at once, without the intervention of an argument, applies the spark. His brother, after having produced a flame by the most inverted order of operations, by a slow and tortuous route, must fix himself to the spot to reason for a lifetime lest the community may not hold to precisely his notions, or the notions of his denomination, respecting fire in general, or respecting its relations to water and other bodies incombustible and combustible, and respecting every thing resembling it in nature but not exactly like it, as if correct opinions on such extraneous questions were of vital

Digitized by Google

consequence in the enterprise undertaken by the ministry. He, however, in the time occupied by the other in discussing without settling such questions, has been the means of starting more revivals, than the other man has needless propositions for discussion. The one is slow in work and stationary in his residence, because he undertakes to propagate religion through a system of opinions. The other flies over the world with the most rapid motion, and is equally quick in the production of results, because he propagates religion by propagating nothing else, leaving the religion of the people to lead them to correct opinions, rather than trying by the instrumentality of opinions to spread religion.

The man who goes into the world to propagate religion because he enjoys it in his own experience—who goes out, in a word, to propagate that experience itself—waits not for a call from any people, but goes because he feels that he is sent. The actual work of God upon the heart, which we now-a-days call religion, always carries this feeling with it. This conviction of duty is accompanied also by a corresponding willingness to go and labor in the cause of bringing souls to Christ. Every converted man feels the sacred impulse to go about among his acquaintances, and oftentimes to go beyond the circle in which he had moved before, to publish the joy of his own heart, and to invite all around him to accept the life that he is conscious of living by faith on the Son of God. The minister is one of these converted men, who feels this impulse so strongly, that he cannot consent to spend his time in any other business, but must give himself entirely to the work of proclaiming this heartfelt salvation to all whom he can prevail upon to listen to his voice. Not only his theory of preaching, therefore, but the conviction of his duty to preach at all, he owes to this inward experience of religion, whose essence, as we have seen, is universal love. He does not wait for the people to call him. He goes out and calls the people. The people might never call him; they might

Digitized by Google

never feel their need of what he has to teach; and this, indeed, would always and everywhere be the case. The Gospel came not into the world because it was asked for by the world. The very opposite was the order of events by which it came. God loved the world and so offered up his Son. The Son loved the world and gave himself to die without being asked to do it. He sent his apostles, his missionaries, his representatives, not because the different sections of the world demanded of him this assistance, but because he felt the impulse of saving a lost and ruined race. In the same way, these missionaries at first went forth, not by the invitation of the communities to which they went, but generally in spite of every species of objection and opposition to their enterprise, simply because they were constrained to follow the direction by sharing the impulse of that love, which, through their Master, and at the moment of their new creation, had descended to them from God himself. The entire system of salvation, in fact, instead of beginning with the people and going back toward God, takes its origin with God and then travels down and outward to the people. This is the radical idea of the economy of Christianity; and this, as the reader well knows, is the radical idea of the economy of Methodism. St. Paul, and his fellow-apostles, not tarrying to be invited by the inhabitants of Judea and of the countries of the Gentiles, went forth over the Roman world, into every nation and province, and even to the remotest corners of the globe, because they had a spark of that love, which offered Jesus as the Redeemer and Saviour of the race before the race had found out its want. It was this same work of God upon the heart, and not the desires of the world's population, which, in the hour in which Methodism was born, sent Wesley all over Great Britain, and Coke to the British empire of the Indies, and Whitefield to the hills and valleys of New England, when neither one of them knew an individual in the places to which they went who desired their coming.

Digitized by Google

It was this fundamental principle of action that thus, without being foreseen or planned, brought into existence the itinerant system of the ministerial work by which Methodism has been everywhere distinguished. It is the principle set forth by Christ, when he declares that he came into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost." He came not "to call the righteous," nor was he called by the righteous; but his mission was to come and call "sinners to repentance;" and this is the theory of the enterprise of evangelizing the race, which was adopted at the first, and which has ever since been carried out, by Methodism. The ascending Saviour had commanded his disciples to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and that "whether they would hear or forbear;" in the same spirit Wesley, when asked by a scoffing priest of what parish he was rector, made the celebrated answer—"The world is my parish;" and both he and his ministerial associates and successors have occupied that parish, not because the people of it petitioned them to do so, but because they were thus obeying, not only the order of the great plan of saving the fallen race, but the religious impulse which constituted the invariable and paramount element of a genuine experience of the work of God upon the heart. When, by the proclamation of this experience, felt in their own hearts, and established by the word of God, a sufficient number have been awakened and converted in any place to constitute a class, a class is formed, and this, in its turn, becomes a church; these churches are then multiplied, by the same agency of the itinerating ministry, till there are enough for the formation of a conference; and thus, beginning with the ministers, who feel impelled to preach by the love of God and man which makes up the sum of their experience, the wonderful movement called Methodism took its origin in the world, and has now become the greatest religious denomination of modern times.

Digitized by Google

Such being the economy of Methodism in relation to the propagation of Christianity, let us now contrast it for a moment with the order pursued by those who make opinions, a confession, a creed, the starting-point and center of their operations. The course taken is substantially identical in all the religious denominations which arose out of the Lutheran Reformation. As they all make the subscription to articles of faith the final and indispensable qualification to church membership, and, therefore, begin and carry forward their work everywhere by preaching to the head rather than the heart, or to the heart through the head, so they all lay the foundation of every society they form on the basis of a creed. The mode pursued by them all, indeed, is about the same as that followed by the Congregationalists of New England; and this mode is not only well known, but it has been laid down for the benefit of all concerned in printed publications. In the Congregational Year-Book, for example, for the year 1858, the subjoined directions are given for the formation of new societies of that order: "Determine first," says this annual expositor of their system, "whether there are individuals enough who would fellowship each other in *doctrine* and *covenant* to constitute a church. Secondly, whether there is, or is likely to be, a population from which, with the divine blessing, a self-sustaining and prosperous church can be gathered. Thirdly, whether there are no accommodations provided where satisfactory worship and Christian fellowship can now be enjoyed. These questions settled in the affirmative, let there be a meeting of those wishing a new organization, in which there shall be the fullest expression of feelings toward God in prayer, and toward one another in free conversation in reference to the solemn undertaking; and let there be still another meeting, in which prayer and remarks shall intermingle, and the mind of the great Head of the Church be ascertained. When the way shall seem to be opened for another step, a moderator and a scribe should be

Digitized by Google

appointed, and a committee raised to prepare articles of faith, and a covenant, to be presented at an adjourned meeting. At the adjourned meeting, the articles of faith and the covenant being examined, and personally assented to, some such vote as the following seems at this time appropriate: 'Voted, that we now form ourselves into a Congregational Church, and adopt the following articles of faith and covenant, in testimony of which we hereunto affix our names.'" The church being thus constituted, the next matter is to call a minister, the process of which calling is thus set forth: "The custom among Congregationalists, although somewhat various, generally favors the raising of a special committee, entitled the Committee for the Supply of the Pulpit. Although the church is the body most deeply interested, and to which, if to either exclusively, this business may with the greatest security be committed, yet, as the parish only is a corporate body, and the duties of this committee involve financial interests, it is common to intrust this service of supplying the pulpit to joint committees of the church and society, the former having the majority. Very much depends, more than is commonly appreciated, upon the character of this committee. If its members have *good common sense*, with a fair quota of experience, they can avoid or even allay jealousies and party spirit; but if they commit a few indiscretions, they will engender strife, from the blighting influence of which religion will suffer for years. There are three prominent courses which such committees pursue. One is to employ a great variety of preachers as 'supplies,' and then call upon the church or society to decide which of these shall be requested to preach as a candidate, or be invited, it may be, to settle as pastor. But in the diversity of taste prvailing among the multitude, each, or at least several, of these 'supplies' will gain votaries; and *thus the strife begins.* Another course sometimes adopted by the committee is to select two or three candidates, and after they have been heard for an equal length of time, refer the ques-

Digitized by Google

tion: To which of these shall a 'call' be extended? In this case, each candidate proves the favorite of some individuals. Parties are formed, and, as the number of parties is diminished, the contest *increases in warmth*, it may be, in *virulence*. One or the other of these courses specified is frequently, perhaps it may be said generally, pursued; but they are both attended with *an incalculable amount of mischief*. A third course is to form a rational estimate of what kind of a minister the church or society needs, and can reasonably expect to gain, and then make thorough inquiry of those who are acquainted with clergymen, and are capable of forming a judgment respecting them, for a suitable man—and sometimes go and hear for themselves, as a committee, the individual recommended; and not introduce into the pulpit any candidate until they find one whom they believe to be the right man; and never introduce the *second man, until it is settled that the first is not acceptable to the* PEOPLE. In this way, a pastor may be secured with great unanimity and with the happiest results." Such is the mode pursued by Congregationalism in the calling of its ministers; the system is so cumbersome, so slow, so full of peril and trouble, that it is no wonder it has accomplished so little in the world; but the confession of its evils is so direct, and so full, that the account here given of this system would seem to have been written and published by an enemy. Not so, however; it is the account given of Congregationalism by itself; and the same publication which has furnished us with this exposition goes on still further to lay out the difficulties and disasters of this plan. Speaking of the question, whether the "call to settle" should be referred to the church, or to the parish, the Year-Book proceeds to say: "This point is more important than is often imagined. It has been the subject of much controversy in New England; but now it is the fixed policy of Congregationalists to secure the reference of this question *to the church first;* thus giving to professed Christians the

Digitized by Google

power of nomination. There is, sometimes, an unhappy and ruinous jealousy existing between a church and society. While the church should, properly, consult the preferences of a parish, so far as can consistently be done, that parish must be short-sighted and perverse, which does not so appreciate the dependence of the institutions of religion upon vital piety, as to be willing to give the precedence to the church in the selection of a pastor." The pastor having been, by this tedious and contentious process, selected, the next question regards the terms of his settlement, which constitutes another topic for differences and discussions: "If a pastor is settled unconditionally," continues the Year-Book, "or with no provision for the termination of the relation, it is regarded in the eye of the law as a settlement for life, and, as such, it cannot be disturbed, except by the mutual consent of the parties. This mode of settlement derives a sacredness from its associations with life as a whole, and fosters a state of feeling in pastor and people favorable to stability; *but it involves an incidental evil.* There have, sometimes, been found individual clergymen, whose ministrations are not acceptable to their people, and who really ought to yield their position, and *yet refuse to do so;* in such cases the church and society are greatly restrained by, if they are not held entirely subject to, *the will of their pastor.* To avoid such a contingency, the practice has frequently been adopted of incorporating into the terms of settlement the condition that either party may dissolve the relation, by giving six months' notice to that effect. This arrangement involves the evil of causing the relation to be viewed as a temporary matter. The facility with which it enables a *party* to dismiss their pastor, furnishes a *temptation to individuals to create parties*, and exposes the society to hasty action. To avoid each of these extremes, there are parishes which have introduced into the terms of settlement the stipulation that, if the majority of the legal voters in the parish VOTE *that they are*

Digitized by Google

dissatisfied with their pastor, and *give him their reasons in writing*, and then, at the expiration of six months, *vote again* that they wish the pastoral relation to terminate, he shall then consider himself as discharged from his ministerial relation, and from that time shall relinquish any further demand for services performed among them, and that, if he gives to the parish, *in writing*, reasons why he wishes the pastoral relation dissolved, and at the end of six months notifies them that those reasons are not removed, then he shall be at liberty to leave—the dissolution, in either case, being effected by and with the advice of an ecclesiastical council." These are certainly very cumbersome modes of settling and dismissing ministers; and it is particularly to be observed that each one of them involves almost the certainty of party spirit and ill feeling; but the Year-Book proceeds to lay open another method of dissolving the pastoral relation, which, it would seem, must be frequently resorted to by impatient and unscrupulous members of a parish: "When a few individuals wish to have their minister leave, they sometimes meet at the house of some Diotrophes (see 3d Epistle of John, 9th verse), and, as a self-constituted committee, commission one of their number to visit their pastor, and inform him that, in their opinion, his usefulness with that church is at an end. Such a course tends, surely, to bring his usefulness to an end, and gives to a minority a dangerous power. If the reasons why individuals wish their pastor dismissed are not such that they are willing to state them publicly—if they are not such as will prevail with a majority of the church and society—then it behooves these individuals to cherish a quiet and submissive spirit, rather than act clandestinely, or form a clique." True enough; but then these characters, being unconverted men, mere citizens of the parish, whom the Congregational system admits to a voting equality with church members, will not be quiet; they will act together to compel the church to obtain such preaching as suits their taste and

Digitized by Google

opinions; a very small number of these ungodly men, indeed, can thus control the character and labors of a church; and there is, therefore, no reason why the writer of this exposition of Congregationalim should not exclaim, as he does, at the conclusion of his statement, against the common evil of being governed by the tyranny of such minorities: "*Congregationalists*," he says, italicizing every word of the declaration, "*should have no occasion to pray for deliverance from the tyranny of minorities; and the church should be rendered militant by her conflict with her foes, rather than her friends.*" There is evidently a world of meaning in this emphatic sentence; the evil of having not only a church here and there, but all the churches of a large and respectable denomination, liable to be controlled by a very few of the unconverted members of their parishes, is certainly fundamental and enormous; but I see not how this evil, or any of the numerous troubles, difficulties and disasters so pitifully exposed by this Congregational authority, can be remedied, so long as this system of Congregational government and economy is continued. This writer imagines, as has been seen, that much embarrassment would be removed, if the denomination could reach the point of securing to its church members, in every case of the settlement of a pastor, "the power of nomination"—a very small favor, indeed, but one which, it seems, the Congregational churches do not now enjoy; and the consequence is, that, either universally or generally, either actually or virtually, the power of nomination, and the power of election, and the power of dismissal, lies with the members of the parish, who may be and nearly always are destitute of all personal religion. Not only is the whole system, according to the confession of its friends when thus talking among themselves, a heavy, slow, contradictious and quarrelsome system, from one end of it to the other, but the best results of it, according to this same authority, are to put the character of the minister and the character of his

Digitized by Google

preaching into the hands of men, who, from the nature of the case, can care but little, if they care at all, for the propagation of vital and scriptural Christianity. Really, whatever be the forms of action, they call their ministers; they elect them; they dismiss them; they have the most to do, also, in supporting them, because they are always a majority of the parish; and the tendency must be, that, if there is any ministry laboring under the temptation "to meet the tastes of depraved minds"—"to preach what the enemies of the cross wish to hear"—"not to bring men up to religion, but to bring religion down to the depraved inclinations of men"—as Dr. Cooke has charged upon the ministry of Methodism—then, as it seems to me, it must be the clergy of a denomination which is thus universally controlled by outside, unconverted, ungodly men. Such, most truly, must have ever been the result, had not the ministers of the denomination always been, as they are yet, a thousand times better than their system of propagating the word of God.*

This system of the Congregationalists, so exposed and lamented by themselves, was devised, as the well-informed reader must already know, as a retreat and a relief from the yet more complex and more troublesome system of the Church of England, which, in this respect, was but a copy of all the national establishments growing out of the Lutheran Reformation. They all, as has been shown, preached systems of opinion; they all put these opinions in the place of personal religion by making them the test of church membership; they all, by rejecting personal piety as the basis of their organizations, admitted the irreligious citizens of their parishes to positions of influence, to offices of power and trust, in their ecclesiastical governments; they all committed, by adopting the plan of church preferments, by which a single worldly man may appoint the pastors to

* American Congregational Year-Book for 1858, pp. 43–48.

Digitized by Google

several churches, and by which nearly all the churches are positively under the control of unconverted persons, the power of their respective bodies into the hands of men knowing nothing of practical religion; and the result had always been, by the confession of all history, not only a rapid declension of real piety, but almost a total extinction of it, and a general irruption of a flood of popular immorality, in every country where this system had been established. It is no wonder that the Puritans, disgusted with what their eyes beheld all over Europe and among the Episcopal settlements of America, fled from this general corruption of original Christianity, and endeavored to revive the religion of Jesus and his apostles; but they too soon fell into the fatal error of setting up human dogmas in the place of piety; they began to preach at men's intellects rather than their hearts; they became so hot in their zeal for opinions as to compel mankind to subscribe to their creeds, even before they had convinced their judgments; they proceeded, very naturally, but most lamentably, to dispense altogether with personal religion, opening their churches to all members of their parishes, who would profess their articles of faith, and live with external decency; and they thus descended, from one step of degradation to another, throwing the whole power of their order into the hands of the ungodly, and thinking of nothing but the retention of their social and political position as a body, till they were roused from their death-like slumber, as by the trumpet of the arch-angel, at the coming into New-England of Whitefield, the apostle of Methodism, from which day they have been making the most manly struggles for a general revival among them of evangelical piety, in which they would long since have triumphantly succeeded had they not been cramped and confined by their unscriptural views of what constitutes the central idea of a church, by their unscriptural and irrational theory of preaching, and by that unfortunate system of church government now so

Digitized by Google

openly and plaintively regretted by themselves. There is no truly pious man, no friend to our common Christianity, but must pity them for their distresses, and hope to see them rising out of these fundamental difficulties; but, by striving to make themselves the established order in this country, they brought upon them this overpowering influence of the unconverted; they ranked themselves, by their own acts, with the corrupt and imbecile national establishments of other countries, which have so uniformly, from the days of Constantine to those of the first Edwards, fallen from corruption into dissolution; but as the reviving breath of true religion has been breathed upon them, as a proper and prosperous example has been set them, as they still struggle with courage for a general restoration to the purity and efficiency of the apostolic period, it is to be hoped that they will ultimately succeed in becoming a great power among religious denominations; and yet, there is no large encouragement for any church, which shall continue to make the assenting to a creed the leading test of membership, the inculcation of a creed the leading business of the ministry, and the fixing of the settled relations of the ministry and membership, the easy work of unregenerate, irreligious, worldly, and ambitious men, who happen to reside within the limits of its parishes.

What a contrast there is between all this contention and trouble, this perpetual conflict of parishes with churches, in all the denominations which make opinions more important than religion, which put creeds in the place of a genuine Christian life, and the beautiful harmony of that system of propagating Christianity which constitutes the organic existence of universal Methodism! The ministry of Methodism is not called but sent; they go, not to discuss propositions, but to propagate religion; and the world, which they have taken for their parish, lies out before them. To avoid running over each other's field of labor, and have the necessary

Digitized by Google

system in their operations, they come together once a year, in what is called an annual conference, and agree upon the places where they will severally preach the Gospel. This they take upon themselves to do, as well as to fix every other arrangement in relation to their one work of spreading religion among the people, not because the people have conferred upon them the privilege of doing so, but because it is the natural right of every man to go and do good where he pleases. It is the right of the whole body of an annual conference, therefore, to make its own arrangements for the prosecution of an enterprise, not given them by the citizens of the territory they occupy, but freely undertaken by themselves. It is the right of all the annual conferences, also, to meet once in four years for the settlement of questions common to their general work, either as entire bodies, or by delegations elected by themselves. It is nothing but the right of self-control, of self-government, of individual freedom, which every man has by nature, and which has been confirmed by the constitution and statutes of this country. If the ministry retain the exercise of this natural right, without offering a share of it to any other persons, they oppress no one, they infringe no other person's rights, because the people to whom they go are as free to reject as to receive and listen to them. Nor does it concern anybody but the ministers themselves whether they agree to certain fields of labor, by mutual consent, or by the nominations rendered by a committee raised for this purpose by themselves, or by the appointment of a single individual, called a bishop, who is nothing but a committee of one, nominated and elected by those whom he afterward appoints. In every case it amounts to neither more nor less than the right of the ministry to go and labor, after being sent of God, wherever or however they think his Providence may direct; and the exercise of this plain and simple right is the essence of that itinerant system, which everybody has com-

Digitized by Google

plained of for its tyranny, except the only persons in the world who have the smallest right, or reason, or occasion, for finding fault. For if one man has the right to go and preach *what* and *how* and *when* and *where* he pleases, provided he believes himself called to preach at all, and to manage every thing connected with his work of preaching, then a hundred or a thousand men, or any number of associated conferences of men, have the same natural right. The people have no right to interfere with the exercise of this system of preaching. They have no right to complain of it. They have no right to demand an association with it, in its conference organizations, for no one of their rights is invaded by this arrangement, or system, among the preachers. The preacher is free to preach without asking the consent of the public. The public have the right to listen, or to close their ears; and, by listening any number of years, they acquire no right of controlling the system of free preaching, which they did not at first possess. The relation, in a word, between preachers and people, at the beginning and always, is that of the most absolute freedom, of complete independence, on both sides. The one class preaches, and makes its own arrangements in respect to preaching, from the exercise of a natural and fundamental right. The other class listens, and supports this free ministry, with an equal freedom, and from the same natural and fundamental right. There is no crossing, or contradiction, or mixing of rights. These rights of the two classes cannot be mixed. The preachers are not hearers, and, therefore, cannot have the rights of hearers. The hearers, on the other hand, are not preachers, and cannot exercise the rights of preachers. The people, as an organized body of hearers, have not admitted the preachers to the rights of ordinary membership; and what rights they originally had as members, they gave up and abandoned by becoming ministers. In the same way, the preachers have not admitted the people to the rights of ministers, and given

Digitized by Google

them a seat and a vote in their annual and general conferences, which are nothing in the world but associations of preachers coming together to manage their own work of propagating the Gospel. They do, I admit, in their conference transactions, frequently touch upon financial questions, which, according to the rights of the parties as heretofore stated, properly belong to the membership; but it must be remembered distinctly, that all resolutions, all the doings, of these ministerial bodies, in relation to pecuniary matters, are nothing at all but recommendations to the people, which they, in the exercise of their fundamental rights, can treat with the most unrestricted freedom. It must be observed, however, that I speak only of rights, not of expediency, on the one side, as on the other. Nor can it be denied, that either party may, if it so chooses, invite the other party to any amount of participancy in its own prerogatives; but neither party has the right to demand any mixing of these separate prerogatives whatsoever; the government of the whole body of ministers and members, which is based on the simple idea that the ministers have the right of preaching and the membership the right of hearing and supporting, is founded on the fundamental principles of individual and social liberty; and to me it is thus far an insoluble problem, whatever may be my desire to see the two parties coöperating in all the enterprises of the denomination, in what way the people can admit the preachers, or the preachers admit the people, to the exercise of any part of their respective rights, without marring the symmetry of the system, without giving up, indeed, the central and controlling idea of organic Methodism, that the ministry are not *called* but *sent* to preach the Gospel.

Hitherto, at all events, Methodism has been a system of *free* grace preached by a *free* ministry to a *free* people; and its success, as it seems to me, should make us feel satisfied with it as an organization. Indeed, we have reason, I think,

Digitized by Google

to look upon it with admiration. It grew up just as the original system of propagating our religion grew up from the example of Jesus and his apostles. Jesus came into the world, not because he was called for, but because, as he says himself, his Father sent him. He then, in his turn, as he was about to leave the world, sent out his chosen ministry, their very name of apostles signifying that they were sent and not called to preach. These men, as in the case of Paul and Timothy, commissioned and sent out others, to supply places which they could not themselves occupy in person, and to represent and carry on the work, when the original appointees of Christ should have followed him to another world. This, as every one knows, was the fundamental idea of the apostolic church. It is the fundamental idea of organic Methodism. The success attending it in both cases is the most remarkable event in the ecclesiastical history of ancient and of modern times. In the one case, it soon covered the whole Roman empire, then including nearly all the civilized nations of the globe, with the triumphs of the Cross. In the other case, in a little more than an ordinary lifetime, it has accomplished more, it has received more members, than were received by the entire Church of God on earth during the first century of its existence. In the British empire, on which the sun never sets, it has become the second denomination in ecclesiastical, and the first in vitally religious, power. In France, where it has just buried its first missionary to that country, it has roused to a new life the slumbering Protestantism of the land, planted a conference upon the soil of the modern Cæsars, set the fire and fanned the flames of a revival, which has spread over the imperial domain, and passed over the border into Switzerland. In Germany, to which its first missionary was sent but about ten years ago, there is another conference of preachers, with a publishing-house for the production of tracts, books, and periodicals, and another revival now in the

Digitized by Google

full blaze of progress, throwing its splendors far out over the moral darkness of that wonderfully intellectual country, and attracting the attention of the representative men, as well as of the multitude, of that fatherland of modern civilization. The islands of the coast of Europe, and some in the classic waters of the Mediterranean, have received the heralds of this Methodism, one of its missionaries now preaching on the very spot where was born the original Napoleon. Turkey, too, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa a leading power, has been compelled to open the Dardanelles to the reception of the Gospel; and our evangelists have carried into it the word of God, penetrating into the interior of the barbaric empire, and raising among the provinces of the Danube, right along the old and yet existing thoroughfare between the oriental and occidental worlds, the standard of the Cross. Bestowing its first labors upon those countries, which stand as centers of civilization to other countries, it has gone forth into British India, holding up the white flag of love to the warlike and divided populations of that fabulous land, and carried the ministrations of Methodism into the heart of the Flowery Kingdom, planting its standard upon the shores of the Yellow Sea. These foreign operations, however, have in no degree slackened the energy of Methodism in those two great countries, which have now, and are destined for many ages to possess, the control and government of the globe. Great Britain is alive with its activity, and its movements were never so marked and promising as they are now in the United States. This country it regards, in all its plans and enterprises, as the future center of the world. Here, according to the theory of its own undertaking, a new order of civilization, a new social power, surpassing all former example, is to be developed. This seems, at least to the leading minds of Methodism, to be the land foreshadowed by the Roman prophet:

"Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo."

Digitized by Google

It is here, therefore, that Methodism has poured out the most abundantly of its energies and labor; and it is here, also, that its system has enjoyed its most wonderful success. Not only our native population, but the various and heterogeneous populations coming to us, have been the objects of its care. German America, so far as it has yet been converted from European infidelity and formalism, has been mainly converted by the instrumentality of Methodism, and been gathered into her embrace. Norway has sent a large immigration into our country; and this she has had the ability, under God, to receive into her inclosure. The papal additions to this nation, from every land, which seem to withstand every other influence, have very largely bowed before her altars, and entered into her communion. Methodism has more papal converts, I believe, than any other three denominations in the United States. Nor is this the whole of its success. It has outstripped all other denominations in its services to the African portion of our population. Nor is this all; for it is equally a fact that a larger proportion of the aboriginal inhabitants of our soil have been gathered into her pale than into every other denomination of the country. The truth is, her system of evangelization has, on every hand, accomplished marvels of success. Not only has it made a world-wide impression on the ungodly portion of the world's population; it has roused the ecclesiastical bodies of Christendom to a new and better life; it has modified the theology and revolutionized the customs of the churches of nearly every clime; and the reader must admit that these results of Methodism must be attributed, very greatly, to the wisdom and power of the system it has adopted of propagating the word of God. While other denominations, which adopt a theory the reverse of that of Methodism, have been waiting for the people to rise up, according to the plan sketched on a former page, and call for preachers to come to them, the ministers of Methodism have gone out into all the world

Digitized by Google

uninvited, into all the high places and low places, calling the people to come and follow them as they follow Christ. They have thus, and by no other means, performed their miracles of prosperity in every land. They have thus, and in no other way, achieved their miracles here on our native soil. They have thus been able, not only to map out and occupy the settled portions of the country, but also to anticipate the planting of every new settlement, and so causing the very wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose. They have thus been able to anticipate even the great events in the history of our great Republic, whose shadows they saw pointed westward in the morning of her day. They have even gone with the moving masses of our population and helped at the laying of the corner-stones of every new republic. Nay, they have been able to go before these masses. They were there, at the center of every new settlement, teaching the red man to look beyond his cloud-capped hills to heaven, when these populations began to move. Rapid as has been the march of our civilization in that direction, they were in the wildernesses of the West before it. Earlier than the rail-road, as tireless as its locomotives, they have not only tramped along in company with the westward-bound institutions of our nation, but have also gone on before, reaching the goals in time to turn round and shout their countrymen a welcome as they came. Their speed has been more than that of the race-course. They have outrun all events; they have out-stripped the restless foot of avarice; they have always been followed, never anticipated, by the scream of the steam-whistle; and all over the wide-spread savannahs of the West, all over the golden Hesperia of our continent, the electric spark itself, too slow to keep them company, has ever gone flashing along behind them. It is their system, their itine-rancy, whatever may be said in behalf of their message as a recovery of the original ideal of Christianity, that has ren-dered possible such achievements. That very economy,

Digitized by Google

which has received the most criticism, and excited the most sympathy, on the part of those not comprehending the structure of our system nor the philosophy of our success, has been the agency employed by the heartfelt experience of Scriptural Christianity in this great work of self-expansion, in the accomplishment of these grand results. The same system is adapted always and everywhere to bring forth equally abundant fruit. Often modified in its details to meet the changes and peculiarities of times and places, its flexibility will still continue; it will yet undergo many and perhaps some desirable alterations; but it will not fail, as long as Methodism remains Methodism, always to retain the central and controlling idea of a free ministry, who wait not for the world to call them to their work, but go whither they are sent of God; and in this way, they have reason from their past experience, and from the growing momentum of their movement, to look for such a prosperity, in the electric age now dawning on them, as will repay them for all past labors and outdo all former fame!

3. If the reader will now again look, attentively and thoughtfully, upon that experimental piety, which has been set forth as the origin and center of Methodism, he will see that this personal experience of religion is not only the essence of its doctrine, and the creator of its system of propagating the Gospel, but that it has also given form to its style of preaching. There are four ways in which orators address public assemblies. One way is to speak, without any preparation of thinking or of writing, whatever comes into the mind at the time of speaking; another is to premeditate what is to be uttered, and how the utterance shall be made, before getting up to speak; another is to write out whatever has been thus premeditated and then recite it from recollection; and the last is to write and then read from manuscript what has been thus prepared.

These four ways of speaking were open to the first heralds

Digitized by Google

of Methodism; and it was within their ability to adopt either one of them; nor can it be regarded as wonderful that, as a general thing, they began with the one first named, and have since mostly passed over into the second, with a few, here and there, who have gone through the third, and made their final landing at the bottom of the series; for this is the natural course of things when left to follow the universal tendency of human nature.

When an individual is first brought into possession of a new and inspiring idea, or experience, which fills and animates his heart, he burns to impart it to those around him; and this would be particularly true at the reception of so satisfying and expansive an experience as that which we call personal religion; for the recipient of this is not only full of spiritual exultation on his own behalf, but overflowing with the love of his race, and alive with a zeal to bring all men, as rapidly as possible (and he thinks the work can be very readily accomplished), into the same state of enjoyment that he feels himself. This is the common condition of all converted men; it is the common condition of all pious clergymen at the beginning of their career; it is the common condition of every religious movement, while its first fervor remains in its native strength, uncooled and unabated by the natural decay of human passion; and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the first impulse of a redeemed man, whether a member or a minister, is to open his mouth without prior preparation, and pour out what must at once flow forth from the fullness of his heart. The joy he feels not only causes him to fly from person to person, and consequently from place to place, after the itinerant style of labor, but to give vent to his emotion and expression to his experience in such order of presentation, and in such diction, as are prompted at the moment by the impulse which he always carries in him. He utters, without knowing or caring how, what he feels within his heart, and what has taken possession of his

Digitized by Google

whole being, feeling at all times sufficiently prepared to declare what he knows by consciousness to be the substance of his own spiritual state; and his impulse is so strong, his convictions are so forcible, his way before him is so clear, that he would as soon think of preparing himself, by premeditation or by writing, to hold a conversation on the most familiar topic, or to run and tell the people that their city was on fire, and that the conflagration might be stayed in the way he had proceeded in saving his own dwelling, as he would of premeditating or composing a discourse on the necessity, possibility, character, or consequences of practical religion.

This first experience, however, may be kept alive, and maintained in something like its primal heat, by keeping the soul close to the seat and center of all spiritual life, or it may, as is too generally the case, gradually cool down, and work out its transition from an emotion to an idea, when it can no longer utter itself without the aid of premeditation, or the assistance of the pen. Just so far, indeed, as this experience passes over from a consciousness of what it is to a recollection of what it was, so far will the soul require adventitious help in expressing it. The highest eloquence is that of nature, when the orator is so full of his theme, that his words, voice, modulation, action, all spontaneously spring up and go out of him, he knows not how, but with unerring certainty to their mark. Nature, when fully roused, is always the highest and truest art. Art, indeed, is nothing but an attempt to copy nature—to seem to be what nature is—an empty fabric erected after the pattern set by nature; and it comes into existence and finds a place only when nature has lost something of her warmth and power. It is scarcely to be expected of any man, however, whatever may have been the force of his first feeling in the reception of his new experience, that he should never for a moment, amidst the vicissitudes and fluctuations of ordinary life, feel cooler than at the hour of

Digitized by Google

his original inspiration. Sickness, feebleness, derangement of bodily health in any degree, as well as the changes of the world around him, and the changes of the world toward him, will from time to time tend to subdue and modify his first emotion. It is contrary to the very laws of our mental being, indeed, that a passion should long continue, without constant reëxcitement, in its pristine strength; and the religious man has therefore a more difficult task before him, to keep his first fervor at its highest intensity, than is likely, as a general rule, to be performed. Oratory, as a consequence, will drop from its loftiest pitch of absolute spontaneity to the grade below. Not that it must do so; but only that it does, in the common course of things; and this next grade is that which admits of premeditation before speaking.

There are but few persons at any one time living, in fact, capable of such an overwhelming passion, even when religion is the cause of it, as to raise them to this highest rank of oratory. Some of the earliest of the apostles were commanded by their Master not to think beforehand what they should say when called upon to speak; they were assured that both ideas and language adapted to their emergencies should be given them at the moment; and yet, it is not certain, from the words of the command, that they were to have any other aid than what always comes to a speaker, who, like a prophet, feels himself filled to overflowing with the inspiration of his message. The old Hebrew prophets, indeed, always spoke from the immediate impulse they felt within them. So Peter spake on the day of Pentecost. There were examples of this sort of eloquence among the classic orators. It is said of Demosthenes, who generally wrote out and recited his discourses, that occasionally his feelings rose so high that he could not restrain himself long enough to write, and that, in the language of Eratosthenes, when speaking from this "supernatural impulse," he far surpassed his written efforts. Cicero tells us also of several

Digitized by Google

Roman orators, who never premeditated their speeches, because, as they maintained, premeditation cooled down too much the excitement which made them eloquent; and it is well known, that the most forcible of the extant orations of Cicero himself was made from the spur of the occasion, when his emotions carried him far beyond his ordinary style and pitch of eloquence. Such cases have occurred in all countries and in all ages. They have occurred very frequently in English history. They have occurred in the history of our own country. There was Patrick Henry, who, the first time he ever appeared in court, having but little knowledge of any kind whatever, by a single speech made himself the first orator of Virginia, as he afterward became, by speaking wholly from his feelings, the most thrilling speaker of this continent. This style of oratory is possible, indeed, but it can never be very common among the speakers of any age, country, or class of people. It makes too high a demand upon human nature, and the practice of oratory will decline, not only in most persons, but in the progress of every movement, from this standard of absolute perfection, to the second, third, and lowest grades of eloquence, according to the extent of this decay of feeling.

He who possesses nearly this highest exaltation and strength of emotion will find it easy to speak in public by simply thinking out what he is to say, fixing in his mind the several points he may have chosen to make, and selecting a few prominent illustrations, leaving the mind free to fall in with whatever may spontaneously arise either of language, argument, ornamentation, or address. He may carry this work of premeditation, however, to its utmost extent. He may make out his points, his arguments, his illustrations, and also the very language he is to use in speaking. He may carry it so far as to fix upon both the matter and the manner of his performance, even to the smallest particulars of delivery, such as his attitudes and gestures. Everything

Digitized by Google

can be done by thinking and recollection. No excellence is possible to oratory not attainable by this method; for, while it fixes and renders certain the substance of the discourse, it leaves the soul at full play for any of those bursts of highest passion in which the sublimest eloquence consists. However difficult this method may be at first, practice and perseverance will make it easy. The mind will soon learn, though not without great labor and frequent exercise, to invent what is to be said, to arrange what has been invented, to clothe the matter in proper language, to impress it all indelibly upon the memory, and then to deliver with suitable grace and energy, without committing one mark to paper. This was the method of Hortensius, the illustrious rival of Cicero, whose eloquence, as Cicero declares, was always of the highest order, and sometimes beyond any known example. It was the ordinary method of Cicero himself, who, though sometimes reciting what he had precomposed, and oftener speaking from rough notes held in his hand, delivered the greater part of his incomparable orations from this bare mental preparation. He informs us, too, that this was the common mode of the best orators of Rome, many of whom, like Sulpicius and Galba, were so impetuous in their passions, that they could never satisfy themselves by writing.[6] This has been the general method of the great majority of the renowned orators since the classic ages. It requires a large amount of genuine feeling, but admits the preëxistence of any extent or profundity of thinking, of the most ample research, and of every possible means of intellectual, physical, and moral preparation; and it has this advantage over the spontaneous method: that it is adapted to long trains of argument, to the most careful and precise forms of expression, and to a calm and yet forcible and sustained delivery, while the other method is capable, as a general thing, of

[6] Cicero's De Oratore, Lib. ii. cap. 88, and Brutus, cc. 24 and 55.

Digitized by Google

only sudden and brief though superhuman bursts of passionate and overwhelming elocution, which, at moments of peculiar inspiration, are equally within the reach of this lower style of oratory.

When a public speaker, on the other hand, becomes conscious of a yet more considerable loss of original emotion, or of his never having possessed any great amount of feeling, he will descend still further in the scale, and write out what he proposes to deliver, practice the reading and reciting of it in private, and then commit it to memory for public recitation. This was the method of Demosthenes; but it was his method, not because of any known want of emotion, but because of an impediment in his voice, which, otherwise, he thought he could not conquer. Cicero tried the experiment of this mode frequently enough to demonstrate its inexpediency; for he puts into the mouth of Antonius, one of the interlocutors in his immortal dialogue on eloquence, an open condemnation of this practice of writing and reciting: "Those who are studious of speaking," says he, "should embrace in their minds the subjects peculiar to the several departments of eloquence, arranged under general heads, as well as arrayed and adorned, I mean with thoughts and illustrations. These will, by their own force, *beget words*, which always seem to me to be elegant enough, if they are such that the subject seems to have suggested them. All that is required, whether it result from art, or observation, or practice, is but to know those parts of the field in which you may hunt for and trace out what you wish to find; for when you have embraced in your thoughts the whole of any topic, if you are but well-practiced in the treatment of subjects, nothing will escape you, and every circumstance material to the question will occur and suggest itself to you."[1] The great orator everywhere insists that, if the speaker has taken full possession of

[1] De Oratore, Lib. ii., c. 24.

Digitized by Google

his thoughts, his thoughts will give him the utmost *copia verborum* that his case may demand: "If the famous Antipater of Sidon," says he, "whom you, Catullus, very well remember, used to pour forth extempore hexameter and other verses, in various numbers and measures, and if practice had so much power in a man of great ability and memory, that, whenever he turned his thoughts and inclinations upon verse, *the words followed of course*, how much more easily shall we attain this facility in oratory, when application and exercise are employed."[8] He goes so far as to say, very explicitly, that the emotion essential to a successful oration will almost certainly evaporate under the labor and toil of writing, and that, when once dissipated, the feeling that had arisen from the first mental survey of the subject of discourse can never be recalled: "An orator," says he, "may always be master of that discretion which will enable him both to speak and write in the same agreeable manner; but no man can revive at pleasure the ardor of his passions; and when that has once subsided, the fire and pathos of his language will be extinguished. This is the reason why the calm and easy spirit of Lælius seems still to breathe in his writings, while the vigor of Galba is utterly withered away."[9]

Cicero assigns as a reason, why the published speeches of the great orators of antiquity do not equal in eloquence the fame of their delivery, that "the most of them were written, not before they were spoken, but some time afterward," which shows that those undying masters did not follow the practice, nor recommend the custom, of writing and recitation. He did, however, in his younger days, before he had acquired sufficient self-possession to face an audience without something more than a mental preparation, write out his more important addresses at the bar, though he did not commit and recite them: "I now began," he says, "for the first

[8] De Oratore, Lib. iii., c. 50. [9] Brutus, cap. 24.

Digitized by Google

time, to undertake the management of causes, both private and public; not, as most did, with a view to learn my profession, but to make a trial of the abilities which I had taken so much pains to acquire. I had then a second opportunity of attending the instructions of Molo, who came to Rome while Sylla was dictator, to solicit the payment of what was due to his countrymen for their services in the Mithridatic war. My defence of Sextus Roscius, which was the first cause I pleaded, met with such a favorable reception, that, from that moment, I was looked upon as an advocate of the first class, and equal to the greatest and most important causes; and after this, I pleaded many others, which I precomposed with all the care and accuracy of which I was master." [10]

He soon found, however, that the labor of precomposition was entirely inconsistent with any great frequency of speaking; that it became more and more unnecessary as he acquired a greater self-possession; and that, however desirable for a beginner, it was a constant fetter upon that free, and brilliant, and impassioned style of elocution, which marks every really great oration.

It is well known to scholars that Plato wrote a book against the art of public speaking; for his theory was, that a man of good natural abilities can utter, at any time, with sufficient accuracy and eloquence, anything which he really knows and feels, if he has given his subject the benefit of the proper forethought; and Socrates, his master, and the master of all philosophers, laid it down as a maxim, that "all men are sufficiently eloquent in what they understand," thus intimating that the practice of laborious writing and committing to memory is entirely needless. The practice of committing and reciting, indeed, has been rejected by nearly every first class orator since the days of Demosthenes, who followed it,

[10] Brutus, c. 90.

Digitized by Google

as has been seen, from a physical necessity and not from choice. Neither in the Roman Forum, nor in the senate chambers of the free nations that rose up from the ruins of the Roman empire, nor in the parliaments and assemblies of modern nations, has there been more than an occasional instance of reciting speeches. Nor would the practice be tolerated by the taste of modern times. Not only would a member of any of these deliberative assemblies, who should practice recitation, be literally run over and trodden down by those capable of speaking at a moment's warning, but his performance would be regarded as a school-boy declamation, unfit for the arena which derives its reputation and glory from the sudden encounters of men of such strong and earnest spirit, and such ready power, that they never can be found unprepared for action. What position could a reciter have maintained, in the British parliament, in the debates of Fox and Pitt that shook the world, or in those of our own countrymen where Patrick Henry, and Fisher Ames, and John Adams stood always ready to answer, at a moment, the most labored of human compositions? We have had the trial of some reciters in our halls of Congress. There was Preston, famed for the wonderful precision of his gesticulation; there was Prentiss, equally noted for his finely-wrought fancies and easy action; there was Mann, whose elaborate sentences, replete with every classic grace, gave him a brilliant reputation for a day; there was Everett, in whose speeches were to be found the most various learning and the most polished rhetoric; but what could any one or all of these orators do, in an open and free debate, when Clay, or Webster, or Calhoun, thought himself called upon to enter the lists, with his plain, strong, manly style of premeditative or extemporaneous address? They must all of them have felt abashed, while reciting their compositions in the presence of those, who, without lifting a pen, could demolish all such display of precomposed rhetoric and looking-glass elocution at one manly stroke.

Digitized by Google

However this may be, one thing is certain: that the practice of recitation has not only not been recommended in the practice and precepts of the great orators of all ages but is contrary to the very genius of public speaking. The reciter stands up, it is true, before his audience; he has no manuscript to confine his attention; he is free to move about according to the demands of the matter he delivers; but if he recites, exclusively, everything he does is seen by everyone to be mechanical. His diction is not free and easy, but studied; his tones of voice are not natural, but assumed and spurious; his attitudes and gestures spring not from his emotions, but are applied to the words pronounced with a barren and cold formality; his eye, though open upon his audience, is not searching them as a lighted candle, and throwing out the blaze and heat of his present passion, but introverted, wholly engaged in reading a manuscript written upon his memory; and the very best he can do, by the utmost of his exertions, is to give his hearers what they at once perceive to be, not a speech, but a declamation, which is nothing but a semblance of the reality of a genuine oration. It is the form of oratory without its life-giving spirit.

Low and humiliating as this style of public speaking is, however, it is certainly a step higher than the last and lowest method of writing and reading addresses to the public. The mere reciter, if he has lost or abandoned the genius of all true oratory, has at least the merit of wishing to appear to have it, while the reader gives up all claim to oral eloquence whatsoever, and contents himself with the reputation and business of a public reader. His method is against the example and precept of all the great orators of every age and country. In all ages there have been many who took pains to write, and sometimes to precompose their speeches, but only here and there a man, who ventured to read his composition, in a deliberative body, in the place of speaking. There is no case of reading mentioned in the history of

Digitized by Google

Greek and Roman eloquence; there is not a case in any country till after the beginning of the Dark Ages; only a few cases have been known at the bar and in the senates of modern nations; and these, like that of Burke in the British Parliament, never had the influence to change the custom of any nation. Burke, it is true, did read his speeches in the House of Commons; and those speeches are acknowledged to be paragons of the elevated and dignified style of English composition; but, as speeches, they are equally well known to have fallen as harmless to the floor as would have fallen the reading of as many pages from the then irrelevant orations of Isocrates or Lysias. Webster, in the course of a long career of senatorial labor, read a single speech before the Senate of the United States; and the very object he had in view, in this solitary exception to his life, was to avoid that free play of emotion and style, in which all genuine oratory is found. Senator Hill, of New Hampshire, was the only member of the American Senate, since its organization, who made it his habit to read all his speeches to that body; and it is well to remember, that, though a gentleman of more than ordinary ability, a correct, strong, nervous, energetic writer, and a good reader, he generally had the satisfaction of reading to a temporary occupant of the chair, and to such secretaries and reporters as could not consistently leave, even for an hour or two, their posts of labor. Reading, in a word, has never been the mode of the senate, or the bar, or of any class of deliberative assemblies, since the world began; it has been found to be altogether too stiff, too foreign, too dead and formal for any live proceeding or enterprise of living and earnest worldly actors; it cannot adapt itself to the emergencies of any great occasion; it can take no advantage of unexpected occurrences, or circumstances, but must go right along on its iron track, even if it is seen at the moment (but too late for correction) to be running over and crushing the dearest interest it has before it; it confines

Digitized by Google

the eye, the hands, the whole person to one spot; making all free and commanding attitudes, all powerful and yet graceful action, all easy, natural, conversational articulation, positively impossible. When the eye should be searching out the effect of every word and syllable, and catching fire from the reflected passion of the audience, it is fixed to the manuscript lying under the reader's chin; when the hand should be dealing out thought and feeling, at one time winning assent by its gentle movements, then driving conviction to the heart by its resistless force, it is turning over leaves or keeping place upon the paper; when the foot should be holding the form of the speaker in a beautiful, or dignified, or sublime position, according to the shifting sentiments of the address, ready to advance or recede with an unerring obedience to the successive requirements of the occasion, or perhaps to throw a stamp upon the platform that shall startle and yet subdue every listener, it is idly hung up behind the other, or crossed over before it, or dangled down by the side of it, because a reader has no occupation for it; and when the voice, beginning like one in dignified but easy conversation, and gradually rising, sinking, and swelling in the compass and strength of its volume, should be now soft and gentle as a flute, now clear and piercing as a bugle, now running up and down upon every note of the plaintive, pleading, minor scale, now waning from the tones of a trumpet to the sweet and softly expiring cadence of a well executed diminuendo in music, and all the while natural and perfectly adapted to its varying work by the guidance of what it feels and sees, it begins, progresses and closes in one perpetual, unvarying, and tiresome monotony of reading. There is no oratory in this mode of addressing a public body. It is said, I know, that the reader must learn to read as if he were speaking; but it would be just as sensible to tell a man that he must learn to ride on horseback as if he were himself walking. The two things are entirely different; our con-

Digitized by Google

sciousness makes them different the moment we change from one to the other; and an audience will feel, in an instant, whenever a speaker, in the midst of his delivery, reads the smallest scrap of manuscript, even if they do not see it. His tone of voice at once changes; and it would be the same, did he recite the scrap from recollection. When nature makes a difference, and especially a contradiction, it is impossible for art to overcome it; and every effort to overcome, or to conceal, will reveal the deception in the voice and action. Reading cannot be transformed to speaking; it never can be made to have the effect of speaking: it has been always and everywhere rejected, through the entire history of oratory, in all deliberative bodies, as a substitute for speaking; and it entered the pulpit merely because the ministers of Jesus had lost the power of a heartfelt experience, which, while alive and burning for utterance, spurned the restraints and fetters of a manuscript.

There are large, enlightened, and religious denominations, I admit, which follow the practice of reading sermons; their ministers must write and read whatever they say in public; but this was not their original custom; it became their custom only after the first fervor of their enterprises had passed away. Not only the first apostles, but the great reformers of every age, were speakers and not readers. The original propagators and defenders of the German, Helvetic, French, English, and every other branch of the Lutheran Reformation, were speakers and not readers. The Independents of Great Britain, and the Puritans of England and of America, were at the first speakers and not readers. And nearly everything they have all accomplished, in the propagation of Christianity, was accomplished, let it be distinctly recollected, while their preachers were speakers and not readers. The same is true of the Baptist denomination, which, in this country, has done more in the great work of saving the race than any other, excepting only the one forming the main

Digitized by Google

topic of this volume. Its old preachers, the founders and fathers of its cause, never used a manuscript. It is only its modern representatives, who now stand up to enjoy the success of former conflicts, that make use of a support which the fire and energy of their predecessors rendered needless. But I will not use my own words in dealing with these two classes of ministers of a sister denomination. I will employ those of the leading Baptist divine of this country; and I ask the special attention of sermon readers to the two pictures drawn out in the following quotations:

"Let us picture to ourselves," says Dr. Wayland, the authority referred to, "a young man of limited education and retired pursuits, who would hardly dare to open his lips in mixed society, impressed with the conviction that it is his duty to preach Christ. He must stand up without any aid from writing, and deliver a discourse to a mixed assembly. The pecuniary sacrifice which he must make is nothing in his eyes—this he has willingly made; but how shall he occupy the attention of an audience? He has no accumulated treasures of reading or study on which he can rely. He has read little except his Bible, but he has been in the habit of studying that carefully and prayerfully. He knows that there will be before him men older, wiser, and better educated than himself. The danger of breaking down, and retiring in utter confusion from the great assembly, the fear of losing his recollections of what he had mentally prepared, the conscientious dread of so stating the truth that souls may be lost through his imperfection, and the fear lest he should offend God by his fear of man that bringeth a snare, all fill him with apprehension. He looks to man for aid, but from this source no help comes. He looks to God, and hears the command repeated, 'Son of man, preach the preaching that I bid thee.' He turns his thoughts inward, and the voice utters: 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.' In an agony he resorts to prayer, he can find no refuge but in the promises

Digitized by Google

of God. Christ has said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, and lo, I am with you always.' He begins to take courage, but his faith is only a bruised reed. He wrestles with God for help from on high. His faith gains strength by the effort. Another promise serves as a cordial to his soul. One after another, every earthly trust is abandoned, and he is at last enabled to cast himself wholly on the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. Trembling, hoping, fearing, he goes forth to meet the people. His knees smite one against another, as he ascends the pulpit stairs. In a voice scarcely audible, he calls upon God for his blessing upon the congregation. He commences his sermon. His own voice seems strange to him. Gradually he forgets himself, and loses his fears. As a prophet from God he delivers his message. The powers of his mind begin to react. He is transported beyond himself. He would that the whole world were present to hear the story of redeeming love. He pours out his soul in earnest entreaty. He warns the ungodly, as though he and they were already in view of the judgment-seat. Words, burning and impassioned, come unbidden to his bursting heart. The time will not allow him to say half that fills his soul. He sits down, and thanks God for fulfilling his promise, but fears that it can never be thus with him again. When he attempts to preach again, the same conflict is renewed, until, in preaching, this becomes the habit of his soul. This is the school in which our older preachers were nurtured, and it is difficult to imagine a better school for the cultivation of pulpit eloquence."

Nor is there, indeed, a more scriptural, natural, or effectual way of propagating the practical experience of our religion. But let us now look upon this author's picture of the character and behavior of the modern sermon-readers:

"A young man, just in opening youth, is converted. He feels a desire to become a minister of the Gospel. He is encouraged by his friends to pursue a course of preparatory

Digitized by Google

study. He devotes several years to secular learning. He learns in college, to write on any subject of science or literature. He pursues the study of theology. He learns to write on a sacred theme. He prepares, thoughtfully, a written discourse. He writes it over and over again, and it receives the last criticism of his instructors. It is in accurate and elegant English, and 'fit to preach before any congregation.' He has asked for a blessing of God in writing it. He does the same before delivering it. He takes it in his pocket, and reads it before an assembly. He is at first a little fluttered at the novelty of his position, but he has no fear of failure, for he knows the sermon to be perfectly accurate in doctrine and expression. Where is there here the room for *burning enthusiasm*, for that *power* which transports men? No one can move others without being deeply moved himself. It is in this earnest and deep-felt trust in God that the power of the old ministers consisted." [11]

Sermon readers, however, adhere to this custom with a strange tenacity; and their practice is sometimes defended, in the face of all classic example and instruction, and against the united voice of the great orators and all the great teachers of oratory of every age and clime. In the Congregational Year-Book for 1858, for instance, the Rev. Dr. Shepard, professor in the Theological Seminary of Bangor, a strong and worthy man, makes a vigorous defence of sermon-writing, leveling a sturdy blow, at the same time, against the extemporaneous method of address: "In the light of our history," says he, "we pronounce the clamor, raised in some quarters against all writing for the pulpit, a miserably shallow and senseless clamor. The pulpit cannot maintain its molding efficacy, its ruling position, unless the men thereof are men of the sturdy pen as well as the nimble tongue. People, take them as they rise, are greatly given to be lazy;

[11] Wayland's Principles and Practices of Baptists, pp. 25–26.

Digitized by Google

hard thinking is hard work; and lazy men won't do it, if they can help it. Let the mere off-hand be the mode and the law, and we shall have it—mere flippant, off-hand, shallow, extemporaneous dribble. It will answer for exhortation, but not for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The thin liquid flow will do for babes; but it will not support the stomachs of men."

This, without dispute, is a very emphatic decision of a controverted subject; and though not saying so in words, it was evidently intended, not only to cast reproach upon the practice of speaking without manuscript, but to bolster up the evil custom of reading sermons. As to writing, there is no controversy; though purely extemporaneous speakers do not write what they utter, they may consistently write much by way of improving their style of speaking, according to the advice of all the great teachers of elocution; and those who make all their speeches by premeditation only, like Robert Hall, may, with him, write so incessantly and carefully as to be able to speak, without a scrap of manuscript, with the accuracy and elegance of an elaborate composition. Nothing, indeed, can be said against writing. It has been well said by Cicero, in fact, that "the most consummate teacher of eloquence is the pen." A finished diction can scarcely be acquired without great diligence and care in writing. It was by daily and laborious exercises of the pen that Cicero obtained a final superiority over Hortensius, who, in the latter years of his life, neglected his mental preparations for the bar, and spoke very frequently without much labor of premeditation. He tells us, in his treatise concerning oratory, that, to be an orator, a man "must have a well-cultivated genius, like a field not once ploughed only, but again and again, with renewed and repeated tillage, that it may produce better and larger crops; and the cultivation here required is experience, attentive hearing of other ora-

Digitized by Google

tors, reading, and *writing*.[12] Touching upon the imitation of the great masters of classic Greece, such as Demosthenes, Hyperides, Æschines, and Lycurgus, he declares that all real progress in the acquisition of a finished style includes among its needful exercises a habit of patient composition: "Whoever shall seek to obtain such resemblance," he says, "let him endeavor to acquire it by frequent and laborious exercise, and especially by composition; and if our friend Sulpicius would practice this, his language would be more compact; for there is now in it at times, as farmers say of their corn when in the blade, amidst the greatest fertility, a sort of luxuriance which ought to be, as it were, *eaten down* by the use of the pen."[13] To beginners, who are intent on the formation of a good off-hand style, he gives the advice to write as much as possible: "Writing is said to be the best and most excellent modeler and teacher of oratory; and not without reason; for if what is meditated and considered easily surpasses sudden and extemporary speech"—this is true excepting where there is deep and overwhelming passion—"a constant and diligent habit of writing will surely be of more effect than meditation and consideration itself; since all the arguments relating to the subject on which we write, whether they are suggested by art or by a certain power of genius and understanding, will present themselves and occur to us, while we examine and contemplate it in the full light of our intellect; and all the thoughts and

[12] De Oratore, Lib. ii. c. 30.

[13] De Oratore, Lib. ii. c. 23. This "eating down" of a too luxuriant diction by writing, reminds a classical scholar of what Virgil (Georg. i. 114) says about subduing a crop by feeding it; and Pliny (i. 18,) has a paragraph upon the same topic: "Luxuries segetum castigatur dente pecoris, in herba duntaxat, et depastæ quidem vel sæpius nullam in spica injuriam sentiunt: *Ita juvenilis ubertas et luxuries orationis stylo et assiduitate scribendi quasi absumitur et reprimitur.* Pliny was himself an orator, as well as scholar, and knew the value of this *assiduitas scribendi!*"

Digitized by Google

words, which are the most expressive of their kind, must of necessity come under and submit to the keenness of our judgment while writing; and a fair arrangement and collocation of the words is effected by writing, in a certain rhythm and measure, not poetical but oratorical. Such are the qualities which bring applause and admiration to good orators; nor will any man ever attain them, unless after long and great practice in writing, however resolutely he may have exercised himself in extemporary speeches; and he who comes to speak, after practice in writing, brings this advantage with him, that *though he speak at the call of the moment*, yet what he has to say will bear a certain resemblance to something written." [14] No teacher of oratory, indeed, insists more earnestly on a diligent use of the pen than Cicero; and I have here quoted his strongest passage upon the subject; it is the strongest passage of its kind in the entire circle of classic authors; and yet, let it be carefully observed, while great emphasis is employed in recommending to learners of eloquence the value of composition as an exercise in the acquisition of a perfect style, there is not one word uttered here, nor anywhere else in the pages of Cicero, nor in any extant Greek or Roman classic, as I think I can affirm from personal examination, in favor of even a boy's *reading* his speeches to his tutors, and much less in favor of an *orator's* reading a written oration to the public.

The first and profoundest of the classic writers upon oratory, as the learned well know, was the great Attic philosopher, Aristotle. He not only wrote a work on rhetoric, which, with the ancients, always included oratory, but he repeated its elementary principles in another treatise composed expressly for the instruction of his royal pupil, Alexander the Great; and I think I am prepared to say, that, in

[14] De Oratore, Lib. i. c. 33.

Digitized by Google

neither of these productions, though both of them profess to contain everything essential to an orator, and both of which were the product of the most critical and exhaustive thinker of the most oratorical era of the most eloquent nation of the world, can there be found a syllable in favor of *reading*, I will not say a sermon, but anything in the nature of a speech, as sermons are now read by the ministers of existing sermon-reading denominations. On the contrary, the very frame-work of the oratorical art, as laid down by him, entirely and emphatically excludes the practice.

The next great authority, in the order of time, is Cicero, who has been found to say everything that can be said on the side of writing as an oratorical exercise, but not a word for the practice of putting reading in the place of speaking. Cicero bases his three works on oratory on the system written out by Aristotle, who had declared that nature alone is the foundation of all eloquence, and that nothing but the trimming of nature is to be brought about by art; and this art of speaking he had divided off into the five cardinal parts of invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and pronunciation. This classification Cicero adopted, giving the credit of it to Aristotle in the most explicit manner: "Quasi materia," says he, in his first book on Invention, "quidem nobis rhetoricæ videtur ea, quam Aristoteli visam esse diximus, partes autem hæ, quas plerique dixerunt, inventio, dispositio, elocutio, *memoria*, pronuntiatio." And now let the reader note, that this great master, like his illustrious predecessor, not only makes the cultivation of the memory a necessary exercise to every orator, but sets down the use of the memory as one of the five fundamental operations of the orator's mind in every effort of his art. The reading of speeches, therefore, if I may put such contradictory terms together, is thus entirely excluded by the very frame-work of oratory as furnished by Cicero, as well as by Aristotle; and this emphatic

Digitized by Google

appeal to the general opinion and practice of antiquity—quas plerique dixerunt—shows that his system had prevailed from the days of Aristotle to his own.[18]

Next to Cicero, in the order of time, Quintilian holds among classic authors the place of universal teacher of oratory; his authority has always stood by the side of that of Cicero and Aristotle; as a systematic teacher, indeed, he stands far above them; and yet he, in his turn, makes the same general division of his art that they had made before him. He lays the greatest stress on the possession of a retentive and ready memory: "The *memory*," says he, "being an *indispensable property* of an orator, is chiefly strengthened and nourished by *practice*." But this could hardly be the correct value of this faculty, if an orator were allowed to write out and read his discourses. Memory would then be the least important of the five cardinal parts of oratory. But we are not left to inferences as to the meaning of this writer. He makes the emphatic statement that speaking ought to be learned, not only before composition, but in order to the formation of a good style of writing: "In order to write well," says he, "we are supposed to speak well;" and he sustains his position by reference to the ancient professors of his art. He lays it down as a maxim, that, if an orator will only be careful of his ideas, he will never lack for the means of expressing them, even if he does not write; and, in support of this position, he quotes with marked approval the well known verse of Horace—

"Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequuntur"—

that words always run willingly to the call of thought. In

[18] This five-fold division of oratory, made by Cicero in his juvenile performance on Invention, he maintained through every period of his life; and the reader may find it referred to in the following places of his maturest works: De Oratore, Lib. i. c. 31, and in c. 42; Lib. ii. c. 19; and in his Brutus, c. 6.

Digitized by Google

another place, he gives a formal description of the art of public speaking according to the practice of the great orators, and according to the principles of his work: "Are we not speaking one thing," says he, "while we are thinking upon what we are to say next; are we not, at one and the same time, obliged to supply invention with matter, words with propriety, and action with gracefulness, and all the while be attentive to our pronunciation, to our looks, and to our gestures?" True enough, that, as every one knows, *is* the work of a public speaker, but not of a public reader; and this classic author could have drawn no such portrayal of the act of speaking, had it been the habit of the best Roman orators, or agreeable to what he considered oratory, to *read* a discourse in public. Indeed, he goes so far in another place as to ridicule the small pretenders to oratory in his day, who, as in our own, are so finical about their diction, that they can never appear before an audience without having written out their ideas, in the secrecy of their closets, and with a great straining after something remarkable in diction: "You may see such men," he says, "without any rational plan of *thinking*, for several days together, with their eyes fixed upon the ceiling, waiting till some bright thought shall dart itself into their brains, or, roused by the muttering noise they make, as by a trumpet, twist their bodies into a thousand shapes, not in pronouncing, but in hunting after, *words*." Quintilian everywhere insists, that a public speaker has only to fit himself for his profession by a wide range of study and a rigid discipline, to be ready, without the need of writing, for any occasion which may happen; and the substance of his great work is, that, after having educated himself fully and thoroughly in the science and art of speaking, an orator has little to do, in any given case, but to be careful of his matter, maintaining that the most proper language and manner of speaking will always rise spontaneously to give expression to his thoughts: "The whole labor of modern

Digitized by Google

orators," he says, just as if he were describing the sermon-readers of our day, "is employed in hunting after single words, and, after they catch them, in weighing and measuring their meaning. Supposing they were always sure of employing only the best expressions, yet a curse upon their success, when purchased by doubts and delays, that cripple the career of eloquence, and damp the warmth of the imagination. Wretched and I may say poor must that orator be, who cannot afford to lose a single word without repining. But he cannot lose it, if he is well-grounded in the principles of eloquence; for application to well-chosen books will furnish him with a large stock of words, and instruct him in the art of placing them properly; and these advantages will be so improved by daily practice, that he never can be at a loss either to find or to apply them." [16]

This, as every one will see, condemns and annihilates the writing and reading method. The doctrine of it is, that a speaker must first learn the elements of oratory, and discipline soul and body to meet its requirements; he must then furnish his memory with a copious supply of language by making himself familiar with the authors of the most perfect diction; then he is to take up his case, whatever it be, and master its points; and then throw himself into the act of speaking with the fullest confidence that he will not suffer for the material and manner of expression: "To an orator," he says, "who follows this method, *things* and *expressions* will present themselves at the same time; but to this purpose, he must be fitted by education. He must have earned, and, as it were, stored up the means of speaking. All the trouble of examining, judging, and comparing, must be over, before we come to the bar. An orator who does not lay a foundation in study, like a man who has no substance in reserve, is perpetually at a loss how to proceed. If an orator is pre-

[16] Institutes, Lib. viii. Introd.

Digitized by Google

pared with the requisites of speaking, *every word will, without being called for, know its duty, and be as obsequious to his meaning as the shadow is to the substance.*" [17]

It is in strict compliance with the mode of speaking taught by this paramount authority among the Roman classics, that, walking in the footsteps of Cicero and Aristotle, as well as of all antiquity, he sums up the contents of his immortal work in the following language: "Now, with many and great authors, I divide the whole system of speaking into five parts: I mean invention, disposition, elocution, *memory*, and delivery, or, what is the same thing, action. Every speech, expressing any certain purpose, must necessarily consist of matter and words; if it is short, and closes with a single proposition, it perhaps requires nothing else; but if it runs into any length, it requires more; for perhaps it is not only material to speak to the purpose, and with propriety, but to know where to introduce what you have to say, thus giving rise to disposition or arrangement. But we shall neither be able to speak all that our subject will admit of, nor yet to introduce everything we have to say in its proper place, without the *assistance of memory*, which, *for that reason*, forms the fourth part. All those four parts, however, may be vitiated, nay, utterly lost upon the hearers, by a pronunciation that is disagreeable, either in the sound, or in the action; and, for this reason, delivery holds the fifth part." But it cannot be denied, and therefore ought not to be concealed, that this great teacher of eloquence admits this method of speaking by mental preparation to require more natural talent, more discipline, and a more thorough intellectual effort than that of writing verbatim what an orator has to say; speaking from a manuscript he represents as the lazy man's method; from the beginning to the end of his classic work, he loads with every variety of condemnation the idea of *reading* a dis-

[17] Institutes, Lib. viii. Introd.

Digitized by Google

course of any character to the public; at the very moment that he confesses the labor called for in the education of a good speaker, as compared with the inferior demands of a mere reader, he maintains that a man can just as well learn to speak without a manuscript, as he can learn any other art; and, unwilling that any should be deterred from this method by the difficulties to be encountered, or seduced into the cheaper way of writing and reading, closes a most eloquent passage, in which he had endeavored to impart the lofty ambition of being an accomplished and ready speaker, by a high and noble sentiment: "It is shameful to despair, when it is possible to succeed!"

Such is the art of speaking in public, as taught and established by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, whose abilities in this department of science were never surpassed, and never equalled. They were the founders of eloquence. Their authority has been paramount, as well as perpetual and universal, for about twenty centuries. They are the three great standards; and the world has never written another name in company with theirs. The world knows not their equal; and yet the three reject, condemn, and even ridicule, the writing and reading method. They reject, condemn and ridicule the method of the sermon readers of the present day. They say, too, that this method was condemned by the great majority of the first writers upon eloquence of the classic nations. Those nations suffered no such apology for speaking as doling out a manuscript. These great authors teach as Quintilian expressly says, that "the best set of words are those that arise from things, or from the subject, and receive from this source the luster they communicate;" they sport, as in the language of this author, over those "who hunt after words as if they were retired into crevices and corners, and wanted to keep out of sight;" and they pour contempt upon all those make-believe orators, who, having not the gifts nor the graces of a proper style of speaking, and are yet so ambitious to be

Digitized by Google

accounted speakers, that they will stoop to read what they ought to be able to utter from the heart, and who, in the attempt of appearing to speak when they only read, "must stick by their notes and written instructions," as Quintilian again laughingly declares, "and flutter like a bird attempting to fly with one leg tethered by a string." It may, indeed, be considered as a settled fact, that the entire authority of the Greek and Roman classics, from the days of Aristotle to those of Cicero, and from Cicero to Quintilian, a period embracing nearly every eminent rhetorician of either language, is on the side of speaking without a manuscript; and it would seem, therefore, as if the learned professor of the theological seminary of Bangor, in behalf of sermon readers generally, were exhibiting something more than courage in making so venturesome an attack on that style of speaking, which was the only style regarded as worthy of the name of oratory in the classic ages.

Whenever the classic ages are referred to, however, as a demonstration of the artistic superiority of speaking over reading, the name and fame of Demosthenes are at once cited, by the advocates of sermon reading, as an argument in opposition. They cite this example, just as if they thought Demosthenes was in the habit of *reading* his orations from the Athenian bema. He wrote many of them, I admit, but there is no account, in any classic writer, of his ever reading one. He wrote these, too, as is stated on the best authority, not because he considered writing necessary to perfect elocution generally, but because of a natural impediment of his voice, which he undertook in this way to conquer, and which made him, as he thought, an exception to the established rule of his art. His written speeches, however, which were what we all know them to be, were not regarded, by those who heard them, as his best. He often spoke, not only without writing, but without premeditation; and, in these sudden discourses, he frequently surpassed himself, speaking

Digitized by Google

with a power that seemed to his hearers like strains of inspiration. "If we believe Eratosthenes, Demetrius the Phalerean, and the comic poets," says Plutarch, in his life of Demosthenes, "there was a greater spirit and boldness in his unpremeditated orations, than in those he had committed to writing;" and Eratosthenes says that, "in his extemporaneous harangues, he often spoke as from a supernatural impulse."[18] This lingual impediment, nevertheless, which caused him to write so many of his speeches, has given him a position in modern times, which the best judges of his own generation did not give him. His orations exist; while those of his off-hand competitors perished with the breath that uttered them; but, among those extemporaneous debaters, who often encountered and overcame him before an Attic audience, there were those who entirely surpassed him. This, I know, is not suffered to be the common opinion in this nation of sermon readers; for there are too many interested to conceal what classic criticism has left us upon this subject; but it is undeniably a fact, that the philosophers and rhetoricians of Athens did not set Demosthenes, as we do, at the head of the orators of their country. His success was looked upon as great, and even wonderful, when his early defects of voice were taken into consideration. "It was agreed, however, on all hands," says Plutarch, "that Demades excelled all the orators, when he trusted to nature only; and that his sudden effusions were superior to the labored speeches of Demosthenes." And in this immediate connection the historian adds: "Aristo of Chios gives us the following account of the opinion of Theophrastus concerning these orators. Being asked in what light he looked upon Demosthenes as an orator, he said: 'I think him worthy of Athens'—what of Demades, 'I think him above it.'" And yet, this Demades, who takes rank above Demosthenes as an

[18] Plutarch's Lives, p. 547, Applegate's Ed.

Digitized by Google

orator, we are told by Quintilian, did not dare to write out his speeches—neque enim orationes scribere est ausus—for fear of marring them![19]

Demades was right. The living image of the mind, the ethereal sacredness of passion, the mercurial delicacy of both thought and feeling, are coy of the mechanical labors of the pen. The true orator, holding in his intellect a clear conception of what he wishes to accomplish, and perceiving the steps successively to be taken to reach his goal, cannot consent to materialize that ideal, to profane that fancy, to waste the fine frenzy of his soul, by the slavish work of composition. He feels that such a task would be a desecration. He conceals within him the conscious burden of his spirit; he turns it over and over, till his conception is as clear as sunlight to his intelligence; he recreates it again and again, till his heart swells with the most delightful passion; he still ponders upon it, all the while waxing more and more intense, till his imagination burns with an impetuous transport; and thus he works it out, every hour more and more carried away with the prelibation of his coming triumph, till he can scarcely wait the slow approach of his opportunity to speak. When the happy moment comes, though oppressed and pained by the delicious labor of his soul, he rejoices in spirit, and rises with a will—not to dole from manuscript what he had struggled to think and strove to feel in the dull retirement of his study — but to pour out of him what he now thinks and feels, and what he can hold no longer. This is oratory; and it was the oratory of the classic ages.

But it is not the example and precepts of classic antiquity alone which these readers and their apologists have to encounter, for the best experience of the modern world is equally against them; and it would be easy, even in this age

[19] Plutarch's Lives, p. 547, Applegate's Ed.

Digitized by Google

of manuscript delivery, to array the entire force of the first-class rhetoricians of the leading nations of the present day on the side opposite to the reading method, in every performance where the highest eloquence is desirable or expected. This, however, would be too wide a labor for the compass of a chapter. Nor is it needed; for I can conceive of no display of such writers capable of adding anything to the established authority of the standards already so largely quoted; but to show that the ancient doctrine has been, and therefore can again be, justified by the success of modern times, whenever there is a man bold enough to declare his independence of a degenerate custom, and adopt the classic method, I will mention a representative name for each of the non-manuscript methods by way of demonstration. As a specimen of what is yet possible in speaking from premeditation only, I will refer to the Rev. Robert Hall, who, the first time he undertook to speak, could not open his mouth after the reading of his text, but sat down with the exclamation that he had "lost all his ideas," and whose failures were frequent for quite a period afterward. But he would not be discouraged. Having made up his mind, that the method of speaking without manuscript was the only one for the pulpit, he resolved to persevere till he should master it. He did persevere; his studies and his efforts were all bent in that direction; and the end was, that he who, at first, rose only to sit down with shame, became the greatest pulpit orator of his age and country. Can the English language produce a collection of discourses more artistic in design, or more perfect in execution, than that given us in his published works? Do not our elementary books in elocution, and our standard authorities in rhetoric, incessantly quote those discourses for specimens, not only of the highest flights of oratory, but of the dignified and grand in English composition? What a picture of pulpit eloquence of the first order is drawn out in the description of his manner of preaching by

Digitized by Google

his very learned biographer, Dr. Gregory! "The commencement of his sermons," says that able critic, "did not excite much expectation in strangers, except they were such as recollected how the mental agitation, produced by diffidence, characterized the first sentences of some of the orators of antiquity. He began with hesitation, and often in a very low and feeble tone, coughing frequently, as though he were oppressed by asthmatic obstructions. As he proceeded, his manner became easy, graceful, and at length highly impassioned; his voice also acquired more flexibility, body, and sweetness, and in all his happier and more successful efforts, swelled into a stream of the most touching and impressive melody. The further he advanced, the more spontaneous, natural, and free from labor seemed the progression of thought. He announced the results of the most extensive reading, of the most impatient investigation, or of the profoundest thinking, with such unassuming simplicity, yet set them in such a position of obvious and lucid reality, that the auditors wondered how things so simple and manifest should have escaped them. Throughout his sermons, he kept his subject thoroughly in view, and so incessantly brought forward new arguments, or new illustrations, to confirm or to explain it, that with him amplification was almost invariably accumulative in its tendency. One thought was succeeded by another, and that by another and another, each more weighty than the preceding, each more calculated to deepen and render permanent, the ultimate impression. He could at pleasure adopt the unadorned, the ornamental, or the energetic; and, indeed, combine them in every diversity of modulation. In his higher flights, what he said of Burke might, with the slightest deduction, be applied to himself—'that his imperial fancy laid all nature under tribute, and collected riches from every scene of the creation, and from every walk of art'—and at the same time, that could be affirmed of Mr. Hall which could *not* be affirmed of Mr.

Digitized by Google

Burke—that he never fatigued and oppressed by gaudy and superfluous imagery. Whenever the subject obviously justified it, he would yield the reins to an eloquence more diffusive and magnificent than the ordinary course of pulpit instruction seemed to require; yet so exquisite was his perception of beauty, and so sound his judgment, that not the coldest taste, provided it were real taste, could ever wish an image omitted which Mr. Hall had introduced. His inexhaustible variety augmented the general effect. The same images, the same illustrations, scarcely ever recurred. So ample were his stores, that repetition of every kind was usually avoided; while in his illustrations he would connect and contract what was disjointed and opposed, or distinctly unfold what was abstracted or obscure, in such terms as were generally intelligible, not only to the well-informed, but to the meanest capacity. As he advanced to his practical applications, all his mental powers were shown in the most palpable but finely balanced exercise. His mind would, if I may so speak, collect itself and come forth with a luminous activity, proving, as he advanced, how vast, and, in some sense, how next to irresistible those powers were. In such seasons, his preaching communicated universal animation: his congregation would seem to partake of his spirit, to think and feel as he did, to be fully influenced by the presence of the objects which he had placed before them, fully actuated by the motives which he had enforced with such energy and pathos. All was doubtless heightened by his singular rapidity of utterance—by the rhythmical structure of his sentences, calculated at once for the transmission of the most momentous truths, for the powers of his voice, and for the convenience of breathing freely at measured intervals—and, more than all, by the unequivocal earnestness and sincerity which pervaded the whole, and by the eloquence of his most speaking countenance and penetrating eye. In his sublimer strains, not only was every faculty of the soul enkindled and in

Digitized by Google

entire operation, but his very features seemed fully to sympathize with the spirit, and to give out, nay to *throw* out, thought and sentiment, and feeling. From the commencement of his discourse an almost breathless silence prevailed, deeply impressive and solemnizing from its singular intenseness. Not a sound was heard but that of the preacher's voice—scarcely an eye but was fixed upon him—not a countenance that he did not watch, and read, and interpret, as he surveyed them again and again with his rapid, ever-excursive glance. As he advanced and increased in animation, five or six of the auditors would be seen to rise and lean forward over the front of their pews, still keeping their eyes upon him. Some new or striking sentiment or expression would, in a few minutes, cause others to rise in like manner: shortly afterward still more, and so on, until, long before the close of the sermon, it often happened that a considerable portion of the congregation were seen standing—every eye directed to the preacher, yet now and then for a moment glancing from one to another, thus transmitting and reciprocating thought and feeling. Mr. Hall himself, though manifestly absorbed in his subject, conscious of the whole, receiving new animation from what he thus witnessed, reflecting it back upon those who were already alive to the inspiration, until all that were susceptible of thought and emotion seemed wound up to the utmost limit of elevation on earth—when he would close, and they would reluctantly and slowly resume their seats." [20]

Such is Dr. Gregory's daguerreotype of the preaching of Robert Hall; and now, let it be remembered, nearly every one of Mr. Hall's discourses, and the most celebrated of them all, were delivered without manuscript, they not having been written out till after they had been delivered. Mr·

[20] Dr. Gregory's Memoirs of Robert Hall prefixed to vol. iii. of Hall's Works, pp. 36–38.

Digitized by Google

Hall, in a word, is a fair specimen of that method of speaking, which, because it premeditates but does not write, is said to be so sure to run into "mere flippant, off-hand, shallow, extemporaneous dribble!"

Nearly contemporaneous with Robert Hall, the Rev. George Whitefield, the prince of declamation, lived. He, too, spoke without a manuscript. He wrote very full sketches, but left room for every sudden impulse. His matter was not equal to that of Mr. Hall; but, in his style of delivery, he was quite superior to him. He was pronounced, by those who heard him, as the greatest elocutionist of modern times. The collection of his discourses, so-called, is but little better than a book of sketches of his leading sermons; and some of these were committed to paper after they had been several times delivered without the smallest written preparation. He has been ranked among reciters, but he had a way of preparing for the pulpit quite his own. Like Hall, his habit was to fix upon his topic, and then work it all out in his mind, repeating the divisions and subdivisions of it to himself, sometimes selecting the very language he expected to employ, till every part of it was fastened in his memory; he next wrote out his sketch and committed this to memory with great care; and then he came before his audience, looking them fully in the eye, drawing the inspiration needed in his delivery from the multitude before him, and supplying himself with new matter, with illustrations, figures, action, from the nature of his subject and from the circumstances of the passing moment. Such was his manner of preparation; and his success as a speaker was truly wonderful. Dr. Franklin celebrates it in a passage too familiar to need quotation; and Southey, in his life of Wesley, when he stood at the head of English critics, attributes that success not to the fact that he was a learned man and wrote out his marvellous discourses, but to the circumstance that he did not *read* them: "It was a great advantage, but it was

Digitized by Google

not the only one," says Southey, "nor the greatest, which he derived from repeating his discourses, and reciting instead of reading them. Had they been delivered from a written copy, one delivery would have been like the last. The paper would have operated as a *spell*, from which he could not depart, invention sleeping while the utterance followed the eye. But when he had nothing before him except the audience whom he was addressing, the judgment and the imagination, as well as the memory, were called forth. Those parts were omitted which had been felt to come feebly from the tongue, and fall heavily on the ear; and their place was supplied by matter *newly laid in* in the course of his studies, or *fresh* from the feeling of the moment. They who lived with him could trace him, in his sermons, to the book which he had last been reading, or the subject which had recently taken his attention. But the salient points of his oratory were not *prepared passages;* they were bursts of passion, like jets of a geyser, when the spring is in full play."

So obvious, in fact, are the evils of the reading method, that there has scarcely been a day, since the birth of Christianity, or since the reading of sermons began to be introduced, when the leading spirits of the Church have not contended, as Quintilian did among the Romans, against this corruption of all manly eloquence. On the continent of Europe, these defenders of the purity of preaching have been very encouragingly successful; for the first pulpit orators of France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, with only rare exceptions, have gained their loftiest triumphs without reading; and in England, where the reading mania began earliest and struggled hardest, and where it has run the most inglorious career—so inglorious that it has become a custom for a minister to purchase his manuscript discourses as he does his dogs and horses—there never have been wanting men of the highest eminence to warn the clergy against

Digitized by Google

the debasing practice of reading sermons. The Rev. Dr. John Edwards, in his work entitled "The Preacher"—a work of great authority with the English clergy—speaks emphatically in opposition to the reading method: "There are several," says he, at the opening of this reading era, "that scandalously confine themselves to their papers, and read them but indifferently after all. A man would think that some of them are but then learning to read, or that they had never seen their notes before that time. This, indeed, is no other than the perverting of the nature of things; for the speaker should look on those he directs his speech to. Wherefore, the custom of those who never look off the book is unnatural and improper. Beside, if a sermon be wholly read, it loses a great deal of its virtue and efficacy, because hereby all laudable action is laid aside, and generally the most ungrateful and shameful postures are taken up, as hanging down their heads and lodging their chins in their breast. Wherefore, I advise my brethren to exercise their talent of memory, and those that are young especially to make use of it at their first undertaking the preacher's office, that so it may become easy to them ever after."

At another time, Sir Richard Blackmore, in his work styled The Accomplished Preacher—another work of the highest reputation in Great Britain—dissuades the British clergy from the corrupt habit of reading sermons: "It is fit to inquire," he says, in his antique and hearty manner, "whether it be more useful to read a written discourse, or bespeak the audience without book. And there are many reasons that should determine us to favor and prefer the last. It is plain this is more natural, and therefore more apt to move the hearer; and the best masters of oratory assure us that when art and study betray themselves, they lose, in a great measure, their force and efficacy, and that no figures are so successful as those that are wholly concealed, and no

Digitized by Google

discourses so persuasive as those that proceed, at least in appearance, from the impulse of the present passion; but this can never be observed when the applicatory part of the sermon is *read;* for the meanest auditor will discover, that this is the effect of skill and industry, and will therefore be apt to sit indifferent, and without serious attention."

A much higher authority still, the Right Rev. Archbishop Leighton, one of the ablest men ever reared up by the Church of England, and at the very head of her pulpit orators, raised his voice, as well as offered his example, in favor of the non-manuscript style of preaching: "Any deliberate opinion of this great man must deserve respect," says his biographer, "even when it may not command acquiescence. It would therefore be wrong to omit mentioning that he disliked the practice of reading sermons—a practice scarcely known across the seas—being of opinion that it detracted much from the weight and authority of preaching. 'I know,' he said, 'that weakness of the memory is pleaded in excuse for this custom; but better minds would make better memories. Such an excuse is unworthy of a man, and much more of a *father*'—[the ancient title of a minister]—who may want *vent* indeed in addressing his children, but ought never to want matter. Like Elihu, he should be *freshed* by speaking."

Such were some of the testimonies and exhortations delivered, from the loftiest positions, against the introduction of the effeminate custom of reading sermons; but the victims of this vice were in the habit of answering, as they do at this day, that it was impossible for a public speaker to command a finished diction without writing; and it was in reply to this apology that the celebrated Bishop Burnet, a name of eternal honor in the English Church, as well as in English history, and a scholar of the highest order, took up his pen in defence of simplicity of language in the pulpit: "The words in a sermon," he maintains, "must be simple, and in common use, not savoring of the schools, nor above the

Digitized by Google

understanding of the people. All long periods, such as carry two or three different thoughts in them, must be avoided; for few hearers can follow or apprehend these; niceties of style are lost before a common auditory. In short, a preacher is to fancy himself as in the room of the most unlearned man in his whole parish; and therefore he must put such parts of his discourse as he would have all understand in so plain a form of words, that it may not be beyond the meanest of them. This he will certainly do, if his desire is to edify them rather than to make them admire himself, as a learned and high-spoken man."

In this paragraph, the illustrious prelate is only repeating the precepts of the old Greek and Roman writers; for not only Aristotle, but Cicero and Quintilian assert, that the most proper diction is that flow of words which rises most spontaneously to the mind, when it is set in motion by a due appreciation of the subject. Quintilian, I know, presents two modes of preparation for the delivery of an oration—writing and premeditation—but in no case does he allow a a man to read; and, after discussing both these modes at great length and with equal skill, he makes known his conclusion in the following manner: "The richest fruit, and, as it were, the fairest reward of an orator's long and laborious course of study, is the power of speaking extemporaneously. He who is not able to do this, ought, in my opinion, *to give up the business of the bar;* and, if the *pen is all he possesses, let him employ it to other purposes.*"[21] The business of the bar was nearly the only business known to the Romans calling for professional oratory; and the principles of elocution, as laid down by these great classics, as certainly include all sorts of speaking. Where there was time, and the circumstances demanded it, they permitted a speaker to write and commit; but they assert, at the same time, that this was

[21] Institutes, Lib. x. c. 8.

Digitized by Google

not often practiced; and it has been stated before that Cicero, when he did not speak without premeditation, made use of only rough notes, which he either held in his hand, or laid upon his desk. Hortensius, his great rival, and oftentimes his superior, like Robert Hall, spoke entirely from premeditation. Reading, as our modern sermon readers deliver their discourses, was a thing entirely condemned in the classic world; writing itself, when carried to any length, was not generally approved; for all the great authorities agreed, that a manuscript, however employed, was a decided bar to a free and easy elocution; and Quintilian, the first authority of them all, utters his convictions upon this point, in the strongest terms: "As to my own part," he says, "when we are to speak extempore, *I am against writing anything at all;* because our mind will always be called off to what we have thus prepared, and we have no opportunity of trying our extemporary faculties. Thus the mind, by wavering between the writing and the memory, loses all the benefit of the one, without attempting to say anything new from the other." [22]

So far, then, from its being the opinion of the most celebrated masters and teachers of the art of speaking, whom the world has known, that the modes of speaking which dispense with the manuscript must necessarily run out into that "thin liquid flow," that "flippant, off-hand, shallow, extemporaneous dribble"—of our critic, it was the method taught and practised by themselves; it was the method which they regarded as the "richest fruit and fairest reward" of the most laborious application; and, instead of joining in a shallow tirade against this style of speaking, they would have banished from their pulpits all persons not possessing the ability to employ it. "If the pen is all he possesses," the classic maxim is, "let him employ it to other purposes."

[22] Institutes, Lib. x. c. 8.

Digitized by Google

With this judgment, as has been seen, corresponds the expressed conviction of the highest literary and clerical authorities of the British world; there is a warm discussion now in progress there, carried on by the first characters of the country, against the practice of reading sermons; and the British Standard, a periodical of great influence in religious circles, expresses the general conviction of English scholars, with the exception of those who have made themselves slaves to their pen and paper, when it says: "Every departure, in religious instruction, from the language of the masses, is to be deprecated as unfavorable to usefulness. By language, I mean both the words employed, and the formation of those words into sentences. Whitefield frequently said, 'I use market language;' and a higher than Whitefield said, 'We use great plainness of speech.' The language in which men buy and sell, and conduct the affairs of life, is the language proper to be employed in communicating the knowledge of religion, and carrying on the exercises of devotion." But this language of the masses, so sanctioned by every high authority from the classic ages to our own, is just that language which will flow the most readily and copiously from the lips of a man, whose head and heart are full of an important subject. A man fully roused feels as did Demades, he does not *dare* to write; for as Quintilian again says, "an imagination warm with recent ideas gives to a style an uninterrupted rapidity, which must be deadened were we to commit to writing what we have to say, and must evaporate by being delayed;" and a man not much roused, if the most spontaneous diction is the best diction, does not need to write. In either case, the non-manuscript method will always be sufficient, will always be the best, if the speaker will remember the maxim of the ancient orators: "Of your words be careful, of your thoughts anxious."

Whoever may have rejected this wise advice, the ministry of Methodism, I am thankful to say, has heeded it; and

Digitized by Google

it seems remarkable that an intelligent man, and much more, entire fraternities of intelligent ministers, in this day and generation of knowledge and improvement, can so perseveringly hold out in their custom of reading sermons, against the authority of all antiquity, against the plainest principles of the art of speaking, and against the most brilliant illustrations of that art from the time that the first classic oration was delivered to the world. Do not these reading clergymen know the classics? Do they know the custom and the teaching of the Greek and Roman orators during the entire period of their sway? Do they know how the pulpit orators of the middle ages, from Vigilantius to Luther, wielded their power and obtained their renown? Do they know whether it was the reading or the speaking clergy of our mother land, from its earliest to its latest annals, which stood highest as effective ministers, or first on the scrolls of fame? Do they know by what style of speaking it was that Bossuet, and Bourdaloue, and Massillon reformed the pulpit of continental Europe, and from what corruption it was thus redeemed? If they have not made themselves acquainted with this subject, why do they delay to learn? If they have, how can they continue in their unclassical, unscientific, degenerate custom, or how can any individual of them send out such a criticism as the one referred to, and risk their reputation with mankind!

If the past is too distant to have its due influence, why is the lesson given by the passing hour disregarded? Who, at the present moment, are the most effective, the most popular, the most ready, able, and eloquent preachers of the world? Who are the ten chief champions of the pulpit in this country? Select the ten, not according to any one person's taste, but according to the public verdict, and will there be found an habitual sermon reader among them all? Would you reach any other result, should you raise the question, for any period of our national existence, since your personal

Digitized by Google

recollection? Go with this inquiry to Great Britain, and ask the citizens of that intelligent country who are the ten whom they now most delight and most throng to hear? Whence comes this infatuation, therefore, which so blinds men that, though having eyes, they cannot see?

It is not necessary, however, that our attention should be given in this inquiry entirely to the pulpit. The children of this world, we are assured, are oftentimes wiser than the children of light; and it is certain that their example, not only in the classic era, but also in our own, has been generally against the practice here condemned. The legal profession, from the days of Cicero to those of Choate, has been almost wholly in the habit of rejecting lengthy manuscripts, and of speaking either from mental preparation only, or from rough notes; and it may be safely affirmed, that a reading barrister would not only lose his causes, but his practice, and be laughed by the multitude from the most distant approaches to the bar. It is a fact which should speak in tones not to be disregarded by the reading clergy of our country, that not a solitary barrister in any civilized nation, whether eminent or not eminent, since the days of Quintilian, has been recorded among the known annals of the profession, as having pleaded his causes in the manner in which the reading ministry plead the cause of the everlasting God. Lawyers have always been, and are yet, off-hand speakers; their glory has all been won by the off-hand method; and it is a glory, so far as oratory is concerned, which throws into thick shade the utmost achievements of the best sermon readers since the world began. What would Curran, or Emmet, or Erskine, or Wirt, or Pinckney have done, in the most capital or critical trial ever conducted by him, had some rhetorician prepared and handed him a written speech, were it as eloquent and powerful as the very god of eloquence could have himself conceived, to be *read* before the court? He would have done with it as Socrates

Digitized by Google

did with the splendid oration sent him by Lysias, the foremost Grecian orator of his day. The philosopher was on trial for his life; the oration was pronounced the most affecting ever composed by that prince of style; but the wise man preferring to make no defense, rather than to approach the tribunal with a display of words, returned the manuscript to its author, saying, "That it was a beautiful composition, but not suited to his way of thinking." Nor can I see anything so very remarkable in this conduct, for I should think that almost any man, unless it were an infatuated sermon-reader, would rather run the hazard of non-resistance, than that of making a mockery of his defense; and such has been the opinion and the practice of the bar, since law and eloquence first formed their alliance for the protection of mankind.[28]

The same style of speaking, so strangely condemned by the manuscript preachers of modern times, has been the style adopted in all the parliaments and senates of every enlightened nation in all periods of the world. The non-manuscript mode, as has been perceived, was the ruling mode among the orators and statesmen of ancient Greece. It was the method, too, as both Cicero and Quintilian tell us, of the best days of Rome. It has been the method, with an occasional exception, as in the case of Burke, in all the legislative chambers of the free European nations of modern history. It was the method of Pitt, of Fox, of Canning, and of

[28] I have quoted what Socrates said from Plutarch, but Cicero (De Oratore, Lib. i. c. 54), says that the philosopher compared the idea of his reciting the written speech before his judges, to his putting on Sicyonian shoes, remarkable for their trim and effeminate appearance, and declared that he must be more fearless and manly, uttering from the heart what might be proper to say on such an occasion. The shoes of Sicyon are described in Lucret. iv. 1121. Socrates thought, it seems, that the reading or reciting of a speech would give him the appearance of a literary dandy!

Digitized by Google

nearly every British statesman of the olden time. It is the method, with the exception of Macaulay, of all the great orators of England at the present day. It has ever been the method of our own legislative halls, which, in the speeches of our great orators, have rivaled the brightest glory of the most eloquent and illustrious era ever beheld by man. Look for a moment, at the career of Daniel Webster. Let Robert Hall show what can be done by the method of premeditation. Let Whitefield stand for what is possible by recitation. Let Webster demonstrate the limits of the extemporaneous style. Webster, when a boy, could not make a declamation before the pupils and teachers of his school. His first attempts at public speaking, when a young man, were sometimes but little better than failures of the most mortifying kind. But he persevered, and like Hall, he finally mastered the art of speaking. He became the best extemporaneous orator of his day; and it is wonderful how any man who ever heard of the name of Webster, could say that the extemporaneous method of delivery, when developed and perfected as it may be, is not equal to any demand, or to any emergency, that can be conceived. Can any demand, can any emergency, go further to try a man, or his way of speaking, than that which called Webster to his feet on the 26th of January, 1830, when he addressed the Senate of the United States on the subject of Foot's resolution in reply to Hayne? And yet, though speaking extemporaneously after only a single night's preparation, the greater part of which was spent in sleep, as he tells the world in the speech itself, were not those demands and emergencies entirely met? It seems as if critics are not only sometimes narrow in their principles but forgetful of their facts. Let a good witness relate to us now, after the lapse of only a few years, what he heard and saw on that great day, that we may behold whether this way of speaking, made "the mode and the law," must necessarily run into that "flippant, off-hand, shallow, extem-

Digitized by Google

poraneous dribble" so strangely charged upon it by sermon readers. Let the day, the occasion, and the scene be again revived: "It was on Tuesday, January, 26th, 1830," says Mr. March, whose account has become a part of the history of his country, "a day to be hereafter forever memorable in senatorial annals, that the Senate resumed the consideration of Foot's resolution. There never was before, in the city, an occasion of so much excitement. To witness this great intellectual contest, multitudes of strangers had for two or three days previous been rushing into the city, and the hotels overflowed. As early as nine o'clock, of this morning, crowds poured into the capitol in hot haste. At twelve o'clock, the hour of meeting, the Senate-chamber, its galleries, floor, and even lobbies, was filled to its utmost capacity. The very stairways were dark with men, who hung on to one another like bees in a swarm. The courtesy of senators accorded to the fairer sex room on the floor—the most gallant of them their own seats. The gay bonnets and brilliant dresses threw a varied and picturesque beauty over the scene, softening and embellishing it.

"Seldom, if ever, has a speaker in this or any other country had more powerful incentives to exertion—a subject the determination of which involved the most important interests, and even the duration of the republic; competitors unequaled in reputation, ability, or position; a name to make still more glorious, or lose forever; and an audience comprising not only persons of this country most eminent in intellectual greatness, but representatives of other nations, where the art of eloquence had flourished for ages. All the soldier seeks in opportunity was here.

"Mr. Webster perceived, and felt equal to, the destinies of the moment. The very greatness of the hazard exhilarated him. His spirits rose with the occasion. He awaited the time of the onset with a stern and impatient joy. He felt like the war-horse of the Scriptures, who 'paweth in the

Digitized by Google

valley and rejoiceth in his strength; who goeth on to meet the armed men; who sayeth among the trumpets, ha! ha! and who smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting.'

"The anxiety to hear the speech was so intense, irrepressible, and universal, that no sooner had the vice-president assumed the chair, than a motion was made, and unanimously carried, to postpone the ordinary preliminaries of senatorial action, and to take up immediately the consideration of the resolution.

"Mr. Webster rose and addressed the Senate. His exordium is known by heart everywhere. 'Mr. President, when the mariner has been tossed, for many days, in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence, and, before we float further on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may, at least, be able to form some conjecture where we now are. I ask for the reading of the resolution.'

"There wanted no more to enchain the attention. There was a spontaneous, though silent, expression of eager approbation, as the orator concluded these opening remarks; and, while the clerk read the resolution, many attempted the impossibility of getting nearer the speaker. Every head was inclined closer toward him, every ear turned in the direction of his voice, and that deep, sudden, mysterious silence followed, which always attends fullness of emotion. From the sea of upturned faces before him, the orator beheld his thoughts reflected as from a mirror. The varying countenance, the suffused eye, the earnest smile, and ever attractive look, assured him of his audience's entire sympathy. If among his hearers there were those who affected at first an indifference to his glowing thoughts and fervent periods, the

Digitized by Google

difficult mask was soon laid aside, and profound, undisguised, devoted attention followed. In the earlier parts of the speech, one of his principal opponents seemed deeply engrossed in the careful perusal of a newspaper he held before his face; but this, on nearer approach, proved to be *upside down*. In truth, all, sooner or later, voluntarily, or in spite of themselves, were wholly carried away by the eloquence of the orator.

"Those who had doubted Mr. Webster's ability to cope with and overcome his opponents, were fully satisfied of their error before he had proceeded far in his speech. Their fears soon took another direction. When they heard his sentences of powerful thought, towering in accumulating grandeur one above another, as if the orator strove, Titan-like, to reach the very heavens themselves, they were dizzy with the apprehension that he would break down in his flight. They dared not believe that genius, learning, any intellectual endowment, however uncommon, that was simply mortal, could sustain itself long in a career seemingly so perilous. They feared an Icarian fall.

"Ah, who can ever forget, that was present to hear, the tremendous, the *awful* burst of eloquence, with which the orator spoke of the Old Bay State? or the tones of deep pathos in which the words were pronounced: 'Mr. President, I shall enter on no encomium upon Massachusetts. There she is—behold her and judge for yourselves. There is her history—the world knows it by heart! The past, at least, is secure. There is Boston, and Concord, and Lexington, and Bunker Hill—and there they will remain forever! The bones of her sons, falling in the great struggle of independence, now lie mingled with the soil of every State, from New England to Georgia—and there they will lie forever! And, sir, where American Liberty raised its first voice, and where its youth was nurtured and sustained, there it still lives, in the strength of its manhood, and full of its original spirit.

Digitized by Google

If discord and disunion should wound it—if party strife and blind ambition should hawk at and tear it—if folly and madness, if uneasiness under salutary restraints, shall succeed to separate it from that Union, by which alone its existence is made sure, it will stand, in the end, by the side of that cradle in which its infancy was rocked; it will stretch forth its arm, with whatever of vigor it may still retain, over the friends who may gather round it; and it will fall at last, if fall it must, amidst the proudest monuments of its own glory, and on the very spot of its origin.'

"What New England heart was there but throbbed with vehement, tumultuous, irrepressible emotion, as he dwelt upon New England sufferings, New England struggles, and New England triumphs, during the war of the Revolution? There was scarcely a dry eye in the Senate; all hearts were overcome; grave judges, and men grown old in dignified life, turned aside their heads to conceal the evidences of their emotion.

"In one corner of the gallery was clustered a group of Massachusetts men. They had hung from the first moment on the words of the speaker, with feelings variously but always warmly excited, deepening in intensity as he proceeded. At first, while the orator was going through his exordium, they held their breath and hid their faces, mindful of the savage attack upon him and New England, and the fearful odds against him, her champion; as he went deeper into his speech, they felt easier; when he turned Hayne's flank, on Banquo's ghost, they breathed freer and deeper. But now, as he alluded to Massachusetts, their feelings were strained to the highest tension; and when the orator, concluding his encomium upon the land of their birth, turned, intentionally or otherwise, his burning eye full upon them, *they shed tears like girls.*

"No one who was not present can understand the excitement of the scene. No one who was can give an adequate

Digitized by Google

description of it. No word-painting can convey the deep, intense enthusiasm, the reverential attention, of that vast assembly, nor limner transfer to canvas their earnest, eager, awe-struck countenance. Though language were as subtile and flexible as thought, it still would be impossible to represent the full idea of the scene."[24]

Such was Webster as an extemporaneous speaker. Such are the possibilities of the extemporaneous method. Such is a specimen of the "thin liquid flow"—of the "extemporaneous dribble"—to which this mode of speaking is so sure to run! Mr. Webster had not a scrap of manuscript before him; he had not a line written and committed to memory; and yet, it is not only his master-piece—his oration for the crown—but the ablest speech ever made on this continent. Think of Daniel Webster, at this crisis, surrounded by a dense crowd of his countrymen, eager to see him tower above all opposition, or hopeful to behold him quivering in the dust, standing up, manuscript in hand, reading his defence! And yet our critic would have us believe that the extemporaneous method is fit only for "babes," it not being powerful enough for the "stomachs of men." But this was never said, so far as I know, of the extemporaneous discourses of the orators of our federal senate; and I am sure this speech of Mr. Webster has generally been considered quite strong enough for the stomach of Mr. Hayne!

It will be said, I am aware, that pleading at the bar, and addressing senates, are not preaching. This is very true; but the art of speaking is the same, wherever it is employed; and it is well known, that the extemporaneous method has had as lofty triumphs in the cause of religion as in any other cause. Our examples, it is also granted, have been taken from the modern pulpit; but the same results would have been reached, had the appeal been made to the preaching of

[24] March's Reminiscences of Congress, pp. 132–148.

Digitized by Google

the apostolic age. That was the age when the foundations of the Church were laid. It was not an age of mere "exhortation," but an age set apart "for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," if there ever was such an age since the beginning of the world. That, certainly, cannot be denied; for every part of Christianity—doctrines, discipline and worship—was then to be newly inculcated upon mankind; and now let us look at the practice of the great teachers of Christianity in the day and hour of its origin. Jesus of Nazareth gave to the world the elements of the new religion. Did he read, or did he utter without manuscript, the Sermon on the Mount? St. Peter was the first of men that acknowledged Christ. Did he read, or did he deliver from his heart, the first recorded sermon of the Apostles of our Lord? St. Stephen was the first of the early non-apostolic preachers, a man mighty in the scriptures, and "filled with the spirit of his work." Did he read, or did he speak "as he was moved upon," when he made the first defence of Christianity before the highest legal and ecclesiastical tribunal of his nation? St. Paul was the chief of the apostles, learned in all the knowledge of his day, a man "of the sturdy pen," as much as he was "of the nimble tongue." Which did his judgment lead him to employ, when "he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come"—the subjects, according to our critic, so unfit for an extemporaneous speaker—before the governor of the land? Was it a written sermon, read from the manuscript, that shook that royal assembly and made Felix tremble? What was the method of that prince of the apostles, wherever he went, from Damascus to Iconium, and from Iconium to Athens? If you wish to see the absurdity of the reading method, think of St. Paul, full of his mission, overflowing with zeal, burning with the love of his race, sitting down in his library, with his eyes set upon the ceiling, as Quintilian would say, or twisting and writhing over his parchment,

Digitized by Google

struggling in the work of composition, like a modern sermon-writer, resolved to appear before an audience at Derbe, or Lystra, or Antioch, or Damascus, or Jerusalem, in a discourse elaborate with all the unities of style, and finished to the utmost pitch of diction! If you would behold anything still more absurd, think of St. Paul's standing up before the classic heathen of Thessalonica, or of Corinth, or of the Athenian capital itself, with the straight and finical manner of a modern sermon-reader, reading his performance! The angels would have wept, and the devils laughed, over such a folly! Had this been the style of the apostolic preachers, of the founders of the Church of God on earth, who had as much place "for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" as any clergyman of our day, the cause of religion would have been blotted out in the very moment of its origin. But they had higher wisdom; and their successors followed their example, until, in the decline of the original fervor of the Church, words began to take the place of thoughts, and the glitter of style was offered to the world by those, whose loss of zeal had robbed them of this readiness of speech.

Methodism, which has now lived out a century, has not yet lost the original fervor of heart, nor that practical experience, which gave, and has continued to it, for nearly four generations, its oratorical preëminence among religious denominations. Liberal in its theology, and in its very nature, it could not be less than liberal also in its modes of preaching; and it has, therefore, never confined itself to either one of the four methods of speaking. Both the Wesleys, before their conversion, wrote and read their sermons; but this practice was almost entirely abandoned from the moment their hearts began to throb to the impetuous transports, to the resistless impulses, of a heartfelt religion. Whitefield, as has been seen, wrote out the substance of what he proposed to say, but depended upon the excitements of the moment for nearly

Digitized by Google

everything particularly eloquent in his discourses. The successors of John Wesley have practiced the three modes of oratory—the extemporaneous, the premeditative, and the recitative; but they have never, since the days of the founder, admitted the degenerate custom of reading sermons. For the first half century, their habit was almost exclusively what is popularly known as the extemporaneous; and ever since, in times of great religious feeling, either with themselves, or with the people, they have given but little attention to the preparation of particular discourses, depending for success mainly upon a general habit of preparedness which comes to a man from reading the scriptures, from prayer, and from the influence of a deep and burning piety. These, with such helps as are furnished by a suitable education, are now the chief reliance of our preachers. It is sometimes said of them, as if it were a fault, that they do not prepare themselves for the ministry like the clergymen of the sermon-reading denominations. The fact is admitted; but the philosophy of the fact is not understood without recurring to the fundamental ideas of Methodism as a system; and when these ideas are clearly comprehended, it is no longer difficult to find a reason for this divergence, not only in preaching, but in the preparation to preach, between the reading and the preaching denominations. Clergymen who write their discourses out in full, for the purpose of reading them verbatim, do so for the reason that they aim at a very high standard of perfection as to the matter, arrangement, diction and pronunciation of their sermons; as their theology requires a long settlement of pastors, two such sermons have to be thought out, studied out, and written out, every week; and this, with the usual pastoral labor, is as much as the most rapid of men can do with any credit for their work. Indeed, it is more than any man can do, and do it well; and the loftier a clergyman's views are of the standard of his profession, the slower will be his work. A thoroughly educated

Digitized by Google

man, possessing all the taste and severity of self-criticism imparted by such an education, and conscious that a written performance from him must always be worthy of his pen, would not find an hour to throw away, if he had a month for the composition of a discourse, the substance of which, with its proper arrangement, could be excogitated thoroughly in half a day. Nearly the whole of his time, in fact—and it is the same, though for other reasons, with sermon-reading clergymen of less culture—is devoted to the mechanical labor of composition. It is even worse with the reciter of sermons; for he not only has to write out his sermons, but commit them to memory, and practice them in private. All this extra labor is saved, however, by the man, who speaks from the impulses of his heart, or who has learned to discourse from premeditation; and the time thus redeemed from the mere druggery of writing, may be devoted to the work of general self-cultivation.

The sermon-writer has no time for general study; not an hour for wide and various reading; scarcely a moment for a proper examination of the great topics of the day in which he lives. He does not live, indeed; he writes. Writing is the beginning and the end of every day of every week of his mortal existence; and his having little or no time for study makes it necessary that he should lay in a large stock of preparation before he begins the duties of his profession. But the speaking minister saves himself all this toil and loss of time. One day a week spent in vigorous thinking will give him all he needs of special preparation for his Sabbaths; and the time grows less, as his mind fills up, and his faculties obtain a greater accuracy, power, and readiness of action, by his habit of general reading and reflection. He has opportunity, too, for mixing in society, for feeling of the popular pulse, for learning the habits, the tastes, the virtues, the vices, in a word, the wants, of the people among whom he labors; and this is the very best sort of particular prepa-

Digitized by Google

ration for the pulpit. Every step he takes, is a step toward the acquisition of some new knowledge, while the writer is all the time pouring out. The speaker is constantly filling up, while the writer is running empty; for the largest depositories of learning will ultimately be exhausted by such continual draughts; and the result is, that, at the age of fifty, the man of little prior preparation for the ministry has altogether outstripped his cotemporary, who devoted ten or fifteen years in acquiring his professional education, but who has since had no time for keeping up a course of life-long mental cultivation. It is not true, however, that all non-manuscript ministers do actually spend the time saved from writing in the culture of their intellectual faculties. Nor do I think they do, as a general thing, employ half as much time this way as they ought; but I am speaking of the possibilities of the two styles of pulpit labor; and I do claim that, even as things are, the speaking ministry has always been, as a whole, more efficient, more able, more successful, more learned, indeed, than the writing and reading ministry. Their learning is less upon theories and systems of theology, more upon practical religion, practical life, and things pertaining to the current knowledge and condition of mankind. It is their ability, however, rather than their science, that has generally distinguished them. While the writing ministers have spent much time on the *theory* of doing, they have been acquiring the power TO DO. They *do* by the impulses of nature what the others seek to know *how* to do by art. They have thus always been efficient workmen; their style of address has been the one which always has been, and always will be, while human nature remains as it is, not only the most approved by the precepts and practice of the great orators, but the most acceptable, the most popular, the most influential; and it is precisely here, that is to be found one of the primary causes of their unparalleled success. The largest part of the ministry of Methodism, from the begin-

Digitized by Google

ning of its history to the present moment, have lived with such a daily sense of the nature and power of vital religion —have enjoyed such a fullness of that experience which constitutes the center and circumference of their cause—that, like the apostles, like the reformers, like all men overflowing with the spirit of their undertaking, they have been able to speak, and that with great energy and effect, without much special preparation at each occasion for speaking. A smaller part, but embracing the more able of her ministers, in addition to this internal force, have been in the habit of making particular preparation for every important occasion, and some preparation for every sermon, by a deep and thorough premeditation. A still smaller number, without losing sight of the power of a genuine experience, have practiced writing and recitation; but the effect produced by this sort of preaching has been so little, compared with the labor of preparation, that it has never had more than now and then an individual to follow it. Of writing and reading exclusively, and for a lifetime, I believe there has never yet been an example within the entire range of Methodism. It cannot be denied, that many of the occupants of her pulpits have been men of less vital piety than the spirit and theory of the denomination call for; it cannot be denied, that many have suffered from some ambition to shine in the pulpit with those graces which a weak faith falsely imagines to be impossible without precomposition; but there has never been so great a loss of the original fervor of heartfelt piety, of a burning desire to save sinners by the proclamation of the Gospel, as to have produced a single example of an exclusive and life-long *reader* of written sermons. When such an example shall occur, if it ever does—which may God forbid! —it will be regarded by the wise men of Methodism as a mark of her decline. Not that there is never an occasion, and a justifiable occasion, for the reading of a discourse from the pulpit. There may be occasions, too, which would justify

Digitized by Google

the recitation of a particular discourse. But the nature of the work of propagating Christianity, and the wants of society, as well as the precepts of the science of oratory, and the practice of the great orators, have always demanded, and will always demand, that what is commonly called the extemporaneous method, which includes the spontaneous and the premeditative, shall be the rule among all ministers, who think more of saving the world than of inculcating theories of religion, and who are better pleased with the shouts of the redeemed than with the applause that follows the most compact and brilliant diction. Not only the loftiest oratory, but the largest success, has always attended upon the speaking ministry; not only Christianity in its infancy, but every revival of it since its first corruption, made its early and only advances under a speaking ministry; and Methodism, therefore, which is the latest revival and the recovery of the original ideal of this glorious work, has achieved its triumphs, and spread itself into if not over every quarter of the globe, by following that style of speaking which the science and art of oratory, in their profoundest productions and most illustrious examples, have always recognized as based on the nature of things and the natural tastes and judgment of mankind.

4. It is a remark of Isaac Taylor, who has been referred to as a philosopher of no second-rate position, that Lady Huntington, one of the earliest of the English Methodists, and a peeress of the realm, ought to have had the success of bringing the nobility of England under the influence of Methodism, and through the agency of the higher classes of making it the religion of the British population. He thinks the people of Great Britain were very much prepared for such a result; and her influence, acting from above downward, could have readily accomplished the revolution. Such seems to be the opinion of Mr. Taylor; but it must be regarded, I think, as an evidence of the possibility of a wise and pro-

Digitized by Google

found man's falling into a fundamental error. This is not the course taken by revolutions. They do not begin at the upper stratum of society and descend to the lower strata. No such revolution, either religious, or political, or social, is on record; and, by going back to the starting-point of all modern revolutions—the introduction of Christianity into the world—the reader will see that the course pursued by unerring Wisdom, was directly opposite to the one suggested by Mr. Taylor. It matters not how exalted may be the individual inaugurating a revolution; but his work will call him, first of all, to the masses of the world's population. It was so with Jesus, who, though the Son of God, found it essential to his enterprise to begin at the very bottom of society, taking upon himself, at the same time, the nature and sympathies of those for whom he labored. The apostles imbibed his spirit and followed his example; this was the order of the work of evangelizing the race, until the Gospel seemed to triumph in the conversion of the Cæsars; and when, after long centuries of corruption, decline, and almost ruin, the spirit of reformation burst forth in the persons of Vigilantius, Huss, Jerome, and Martin Luther, a restoration of the original temper restored also the earliest order of the work of propagating the universal Gospel. Though a learned professor in a German university, and supported in his measures by the protection of his prince, Luther, nevertheless, made his appeals, not only in his own person, but in the persons of his associates and helpers, directly to the body of the German people. The same thing was done by the reformers in nearly every country of continental Europe. Sweden, it is true, received the reformation through the palace of her monarch; and this is now confessed to be the main reason why that kingdom has never been able to come to the full light of the Lutheran Reformation. In England, too, the movement took its origin with the crown, and, through an already established hierarchy, attempted to find

Digitized by Google

its way to the masses of the population; but every reader knows that the English Reformation has never passed beyond a sort of semi-popery, and has not to this day taken possession of the British nation. The aptest possible illustration of this general principle, however, is to be found in the history of that very branch of Methodism, as compared with its sister branch, which gave occasion to the erroneous hypothesis of our philosopher. Lady Huntington was a person of the highest eminence in Great Britain; her husband was one of the leading noblemen of that aristocratic country; her father's house was celebrated among the proudest historic families of the kingdom; her husband died and left her a fortune worthy of his name and kindred; she inherited large estates from her own lordly ancestors; her intellectual abilities and moral character had always been marked as far above the level of her high position; her education had been attended to by her parents, and rendered extraordinary by her own exertions; and with all these advantages, she was noted for her beauty of person, her engaging address, her sound discretion, and an enterprise of disposition from which her family and friends had always anticipated something great. This personage, under the preaching of the Methodists, professed conversion, and was ever afterward confessed to be thoroughly and deeply pious. She made an entire consecration of herself, body, soul, and substance, to the cause and work of God. She devoted all her time and talents, and the whole of her vast property, to the very effort of diffusing true religion among the nobility of Great Britain. She employed Whitefield, Romaine, Venn, and many more of the most eloquent men of the world, to address congregations of the upper class called together at her several princely seats, and to enforce upon them an acceptance of that genuine experience which she herself sat there to recommend. These scenes were enacted, and reënacted, and that without intermission, all over the king-

Digitized by Google

dom for many years. She built preaching houses; she erected and endowed schools and colleges; she traveled incessantly over England; she employed only learned and able men, such as could not fail to command the respect of their aristocratic auditors; she did everything, she turned every stone, she left nothing unattempted, in her undertaking to bring the nobility of the land under the influence of that vital, practical, personal religion which she so richly enjoyed herself. But what was the result of all this effort? Not a nobleman was ever converted by all this expenditure of labor and of means. Lord Chesterfield used to go and listen to her preachers, and then, as the representative of his class, go away and laugh over her eccentricity. His example was almost universally followed by those of his own order, only a few women ever giving themselves the trouble to look after the possibility of leading a religious life amidst the splendors of their class and the gayeties of court. Lady Huntington died poor and disappointed; her cause has since dwindled to a point; and that is the sad end of the last great attempt to revolutionize the world by beginning at the summit.

Look, now, at her cotemporary, John Wesley, the founder and finisher of this work of God. He was a man of great abilities, intellectual and moral; he had received a thorough training at the most learned of the English universities; he had experienced the same work of grace by which Lady Huntington was rendered so industrious and devoted; and he had commenced his enterprise of spreading true religion over England by preaching in the most noted of the parish churches, in which assembled the nobles and gentry of the land. Thus he might have continued to labor to the end of his days, and with as little fruit, probably, as ordinarily waits upon such a course of procedure, had not the wisdom of divine Providence shut the doors of the churches and cathedrals of Great Britain against him, and thrust him out to follow the example of his Master in preaching the Gospel

Digitized by Google

to the poor. From that moment, Wesley acknowledged the auspices, and embraced the omen of his future work, trusting that the sign could not be sinister which called him to walk in such illustrious footsteps. He adopted the poor of the world as the body of his parish. He regulated his entire system, and the instruction imparted from his pulpits, to their capacities and wants. Like his Lord, he discouraged costly apparel, and the erection of costly houses of worship, and the establishment of all expensive customs, that wealth, and the wealthy classes, might not be essential to his success. He turned his attention from the few and fixed it upon the many; he descended from the air, in which nothing but imaginary castles can be erected, and took his position on the solid ground, where he began at once to lay a foundation broad enough, and massive enough, to hold the whole human family. The people whom he gathered into his societies, in England and in the colonies, though without the advantages of wealth, education and position, had one quality in common with the proudest aristocracy of either land. They were Englishmen; they belonged to the great Anglo-Saxon family; the blood of their race ran as pure in their veins as in those of the royal household; and though now poor, now illiterate, now trampled under the feet of the rich and great, they had within them the Anglo-Saxon capacity for improvement. They possessed a physical prowess that no race of men could match; their intellectual ability was of the highest order among the world's inhabitants, and their Anglo-Saxon energy, and enterprise, and power of purpose, were equal to any emergency that might happen. It was this description of men that John Wesley went out to gather. His success in gathering them, in the old country as well as in the new, surpassed all example; and he at once began that work of social elevation among his people, which has since achieved such marvels, raising them to an equality, at least, with any religious body of the world. He found no

Digitized by Google

lords nor ladies among his adherents; he could count no gentlemen of great wealth and station; but he had that which was far better—a race of people capable of anything he might point out to them as an object worthy of their endeavor. He went to work, therefore, to educate and elevate his members; he went to work to make what he had not found; he went forward in the prosecution of a work, which, though strictly religious in itself, could not fail to raise the poor to wealth, the humble to rank, the illiterate to knowledge, and the whole to their full share of national importance and social power. His success in this department of his enterprise has been also wonderful. The great grand-children of the Kingston colliers, of the Bristol laborers, and even of the hod-carriers of Cork and Dublin, are now the great manufacturers of Leeds and Manchester, the great ship-owners of Liverpool and London, the great citizens of the rural districts, as well as of the cities, having their mansions on the very soil where their ancestors were mobbed by the magistrates for holding to that vital godliness, which has since made them the neighbors, if not the rivals, of the nobles. On this side of the Atlantic, from the same class of inhabitants, and under the same tuition, have sprung up, in the course of less than three generations, many of the greatest wealth, of the greatest enterprise in business, of the greatest material influence among the millions of this favored land. There have sprung from it, also, many educated men, many scholars of high eminence, who are now wielding very much of the literary sway that is working out the destinies of this continent. There have sprung from it, too, men of great moral power, philanthropists in heart and life, whose exertions have been felt from one side to the other, and from ocean to ocean, of the Great Republic. From the lowest and humblest of its population, there have come up, indeed, men to sit in the legislative halls of the oldest of the States, to preside over the destinies as well as to lay the corner-stones of

Digitized by Google

new republics, to represent the nation in foreign courts, to sit on the bench of the highest of our national tribunals, and even to hold the reins and guide the progress of this New World itself. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," said Jesus, "and all these things shall be added to you;" and Methodism has everywhere found it so. It has found it so, not by aiming its influences toward the high and great, but by concentrating its energies upon the welfare and elevation of the poor. The law of its progress has been to work from the bottom of the world upward; and it has found this to be the only law of success in the improvement and elevation of the world. Society is a pyramid, which every now and then gets ruinous and tumbles down, or has to be demolished and reconstructed. Vain is the ambition of those builders, therefore, who devote all their care and labor upon the summit. The cap-stone to-day may lie among the foundation rocks to-morrow, or it may be thrown in with other rubbish to fill up the interior of the mighty fabric. At the apex may be seen to-day a polished stone, cut from a Bourbon quarry, which has supplied the material for the same point for ages, but to-morrow you behold a new structure, built up from the demolition of the old one, and at the top a new stone marked Corsica, hitherto unknown to the most experienced workmen. Thus changeable, society has ever been. It is not only a pyramid, but a pyramid of human beings, of "living stones," which, when quarried, squared, and chiseled, find their own places in the ever-growing, ever-changing, never fixed and finished structure. He, therefore, does the most in the reërection of the social fabric, in the ever-recurring reconstruction of the world, who has opened the largest quarry, who supplies the largest amount of suitable material, whose skill is equal to the demands of any and every elevation of the structure, but who remembers, notwithstanding, in everything he does, that every part of the work, from the top-stone down, de-

Digitized by Google

pends at last for its stability and permanence upon the broad and all-comprehending base."[25]

Not a tear is therefore to be shed over the rejection of John Wesley by the higher classes and established powers of the mother country. Not a sigh is to be heaved over the like beginning of his cause on this continent. He had that in him which made him a force which no earthly influences could suppress. He had that in him which made him the type of the enterprise which he had ventured to undertake. The very center of his soul, and everything within him, was possessed, occupied, and controlled by that personal experience, by that vital piety, which has since become the center and circumference of his system of producing, preserving and propagating the original ideal of Christianity, the Gospel of universal love; and his friends on both sides of the ocean, and in every land, as well as the world itself, may witness in the matter and manner of his work the law, as I believe, of all similar prosperity in spreading the influences and power of the religion of the Son of God.

[25] If any one wishes to see the mutability of this social pyramid demonstrated, let him read the recent work of Sir Bernard Burke, on the English Families of Noble Blood, in which he shows, that many of the most notable families in the days of the Tudors, and of the Stuarts, are now extinct; that there are butchers and toll-gathers in England, who have descended in a direct line from the House of Lancaster; and that there are others to be found mending shoes and burying the dead for their livelihood, in whose veins runs the royal blood of all the Plantagenets!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

METHODISM THE RECOVERY OF THE IDEAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND WORSHIP.

HAVING traced the natural history of that personal experience which consists of universal love, and seen it grow into a doctrine, and into a system of self-propagation, consistent with Scripture and after the ideal of original Christianity, the next and last thing is to witness how it creates to itself, and for its own benefit and progress, a system of religious worship, which stands co-equal in importance with its doctrine and discipline as a means of spreading the influence and power of our religion. The worship of a people, in fact, is not only one of the three cardinal elements of their profession, and one of the three forces always at work in propagating that profession, but the result and exponent of the other two; for it is in their public and private worship that is to be beheld, at all times, the exact religious character and condition of any church, and, indeed, of every congregation; and it is therefore to this point, that the thoughtful reader will look most intently, and with the greatest interest, in searching out the causes of the success of that particular movement, whose philosophy I am endeavoring to develop.

We are told in classic story, that when the Roman proconsul, Flaminius, had defeated the Macedonians under King Philip, he proclaimed personal liberty to every inhabitant of Greece, and that the Greeks, who had assembled in the Roman camp in great numbers, as soon as they heard and comprehended the import of the unexpected proclamation,

Digitized by Google

raised such a shout as to stun the birds of the air flying over the spot, and to cause them to fall down dead upon the ground. The shout was at once taken up by the nearest cities of the redeemed nation, and thence echoed from valley to valley, and from mountain-top to mountain-top, till the whole land reverberated with the flying joy; and the account of the event concludes with the declaration, that the voice of the exulting population was heard and recognized many miles at sea.

Human gratitude, when once aroused, is certainly a very beautiful and powerful principle. Let a great benefit be conferred; let the source of that benefit be clearly seen; let there be no doubt respecting its origin and object; and if there is not a response in some degree proportioned to the blessing, then the proof of extreme depravity, in that case, is very obvious. When Hezekiah was informed by the prophet that God was about to rebuke the malady by which he was plainly dying, and to restore him to life and health, he exclaimed: "What is the sign that I should go up into the house of the Lord?" So it happened, at another time, with a large body of the Jewish people. They had been carried into captivity by the King of Babylon; their city and temple had been demolished; but, after years of sorrow in a foreign land, Cyrus had restored them to their native country, and permitted them to rebuild what had been so utterly destroyed. This grant, they saw at once, was the work of an overruling Providence; their prophet had foretold them of the heavenly design; and now, when gathered upon the blackened ruins of their capital, with the decree of restoration and reconstruction in their hands, they would not lift a finger, they would not raise a stone, till they had first of all erected an altar of thanksgiving, and revived the true worship of their God. Around that smoking pile the redeemed population stood, looking upon the sacrificial offerings, and singing the psalm composed expressly for the occasion: "What shall I

Digitized by Google

render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord: I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people." Several centuries afterward, a couple of the messengers of Christ, heralds of the new and glorious Gospel, met a poor fellow-mortal, lame from his birth, at one of the gates of the temple thus restored. He was carried there every day by his friends, that he might receive alms of those who went in to worship. Among other worshipers, Peter and John one day were about to pass through the gate, when their afflicted countryman asked assistance of them. The two apostles fastened their eyes upon him, and Peter said: "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk;" and the account goes on to say, that the Apostle took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and that "his feet and ankle bones received strength." Then followed what so naturally proceeds from a grateful heart. The poor man felt conscious of his restoration to health and strength; he could not doubt by whose power he had been restored; for the name of Jesus had been particularly invoked; and, therefore, "he, leaping up, stood and walked, and *entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and* PRAISING GOD." It is toward God, indeed, that every man's heart immediately turns, as soon as it becomes conscious of that inward experience which God only can bestow. The moment the work is accomplished, and the soul recognizes the proof of its accomplishment, it beholds everything in nature giving thanks to God, and it begins to exclaim: "What shall *I* render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward *me?*" And this feeling, which is always a part of a genuine work of grace, is the foundation of all religious worship. It not only gives existence, but form and fashion, to all worship. The religious services of a people, public, private, social, will always correspond exactly to the

Digitized by Google

amount and character of their personal religion. If they have no religion, nor the tradition of any, they will have no worship; if they have some, but with a feeble consciousness of its source and value, their worship may be sonorous and showy, but it will be as certainly shallow, heartless, and insignificant; if they have deep and fervent piety, accompanied with a strong realization of the author of their spiritual state, they will have a worship at once direct, earnest, and even fervent, though it will also be, at the same time, very simple.[1]

So much we are taught by the philosophy of the subject; and we are brought to the same conclusion by the ample details of history. The worship of God is as old as the race; for it began on earth with our first parents in the garden; and, though interrupted by the fall, it was restored by Abel and the sons of Seth. It was practiced by all the patriarchs to the time of Abraham, who, as the called of God, everywhere built altars, and offered sacrifices, and poured out his heart in grateful returns for the work which had been wrought within him. The household of Abraham was the Church of God on earth; not only was the patriarch himself a man of great devotion, but his wife, his son Isaac, and

[1] The old classic philosophers speak in this strain of the origin and obligation of divine worship. Plato declares "personal piety to be the greatest of the virtues." Aristotle says that "it is madness to despise God and religion." Pythagoras laid down rules for the observance of religious worship, saying, that "it should be performed seriously and with great attention of mind, and not by the by, or by chance." See Plut. in Numa, Cicero's de Legibus, Lib. ii., and the Aur. Carm. 49, of Pythagoras. Even Hobbs (Leviathan, chap. 12), though embracing views destructive to Christianity, agreed with the philosophers of antiquity in making religion, and religious adoration, a necessity of our nature: "Seeing there are no signs," says he, "nor fruit of religion but in man only, there is no cause to doubt but that the seed of religion is also only in man, and consisteth in some peculiar quality, or at least in some eminent degree thereof, not to be found in other living creatures."

Digitized by Google

even his servants, were persons who joined him heartily in the religious services handed down to him from the beginning of the world. His son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob, followed his example, and kept the worship of their ancestral church unadulterated by any of the corruptions of the external world. By the good providence of God, Joseph was sent into Egypt to open the way and prepare a place for the immigration of Israel to that land of safety, where, as servants of the monarch, though tasked with the severities of labor, they enjoyed the freedom of religious worship; and thus, during their four centuries of expatriation and of bondage, they maintained the doctrine, the discipline, and the worship of the church of Abraham, of Abel, and of Seth, in their original directness, earnestness, and simplicity of character. They worshipped God according to their experience and knowledge of him; and as their experience was considerably enlarged by the events of their redemption under Moses from the hands of their oppressors, so their services became at once more zealous, while the simplicity of them was in no way impaired. No sooner had the flying people of God passed through the sea, than the itinerating Church of the Highest celebrated the event by a general assembly of the nation around a common altar, by thanksgiving and prayer, by mutual congratulations and exhortations, and by pæans of victory, prepared expressly for the moment: "Then sung Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, 'I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.'" And Miriam the prophetess, sister of the two leaders of the people, standing opposite to the male members of the great congregation, with the women of the tribes, answered the triumphal shout: "Sing ye to the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!" But, in addition to the simple worship of the heart, as it had been

Digitized by Google

practiced from the days of Abel, Moses was directed to enjoin upon the chosen people a system of services, the ruling object of which was to prefigure the coming, and character, and mission of the promised Redeemer of mankind. These prophetic services must be carefully distinguished from the ordinary religious worship of the Jews. This was brief, simple, and expressive of a great earnestness of genuine devotion. That was complicated, lengthy, imposing, but full of meaning, and indicative of strong faith in the coming of a national, if not a general, Saviour. This, as the proper homage of every living man to God, in view of his character, and of his relations and acts toward the worshipers, was to be perpetual. That looked only to a future event, which, when passed, would leave no significance to ceremonies, whose meaning and sole purpose had been fulfilled. This might be performed anywhere, in the tabernacle of the wilderness, in the temple of the capital of the nation, or at the homes and firesides of the people, in their several families, or at some common place of neighborhood congregation, called a synagogue, where the simple worship of God—the reading of his Word, the hymning of his praise, the offering up of prayer and supplication, the exhortation and instruction of each other in religious things—was practiced. That, on the other hand, could be observed only within the typical tabernacle or temple, at stated seasons, and in behalf of the people, by persons expressly appointed to perform these rites and stand between the population and their God. In the one service, every man was his own priest, and the priest of his own family, having the privilege of coming directly to the Father, through the merits of the promised Son, not only in his own behalf, but in the behalf also of his relatives, his neighbors, and his friends. In the other service, there was a threefold ministry, consisting of the high priest, the priests, and the Levites, who represented the condition and wants of the nation to God, and the promises of God to the nation,

Digitized by Google

the whole being figurative of the wants and condition of the world, and of the divine plan of offering salvation to the race through the sacrificial death of his only-begotten Son. The one service, which was the offering of the heart to God, as a grateful return for that heart-felt experience, which is received through faith in Christ before as well as since his advent, must be essentially the same under all dispensations and in all ages; it must be perpetual and unchangeable, not only through the cycles of time, and during the continuance of this world, but pass onward into eternity, and remain unaltered and unalterable; for it is by this, and in this, that God's will is to be "done on earth as it is in heaven." The other service lost its significance by the coming of the Messiah; its continuance thereafter would have been a falsehood and not a truth; as established by the express intervention of the Almighty, it could not be providentially suffered to remain without casting some shadow of reproach upon its Author; but the Jews, blinded as a nation by their sins, clung to it with a characteristic pertinacity; and so, the temple (where only it could be performed) was demolished, the people, who might otherwise have rebuilt it, were scattered as by a whirlwind into every quarter of the globe, and their *typical* worship thus passed away forever!

This is certainly a correct account, according to the Scriptures, of the two-fold worship of the pre-Messiatic Church of God; and no one need to be confused in his opinions of it by any similar ceremonies among the gentile nations of ancient and of modern times. It has been often said, that the heathen nations have always had their temples, their sacrifices, their priesthood, and their worship; some have undertaken to derive the Jewish system from the pagan, as if Moses had learned all he taught of the Egyptians, who were also the instructors of other countries; but all such hostility to the truth is as illiterate in respect to learning, as it is shallow in its logic. These skeptical writers seem to forget, or wish

Digitized by Google

their readers to forget, that the Church and the true worship of God are not only older than Moses, but older than the Egyptians, and older than the oldest of pagan nations. Not only Abel and Seth, the progenitors of the patriarchal family, whose history is avowedly written out by Moses, but Cain, also, the father of the earliest of the unbelieving nations, whose condition and deeds are referred to in Scripture only when they happen to be for the moment connected with the chosen people, alike erected altars, offered sacrifices, and performed religious rites and ceremonies. The forms of service, according to the Mosaic record, were at first the same among the believers and unbelievers, but, in substance, their respective worships diverged from their very origin. On the day of the fall, and in the very act of condemnation, God gave the promise of a future Redeemer, by whose death the offspring of Adam, through faith, might be individually and universally restored. He there and then, too, without the shadow of a doubt, ordained that that vicarious sacrifice should be typified, and thus kept in mind, by the offering of lambs upon altars erected for the purpose until the promised Redeemer should appear. Abel, and all those believing and trusting in the promise, erected an altar, and laid upon it the firstlings of their flocks, thereby showing their reception of the system of salvation which had been revealed to them of God. Cain and his company, on the other hand, offered upon another altar only the bloodless fruits of the field, thus indicating that they had no confidence in the restoration of the race to life by the death of any future member of that race. Here began the separation of the believing family of the patriarchs and the unbelieving nations of the world; and though the punishment of Cain, and the recollection of it, may have caused him and his descendants to adopt the substance of the patriarchal worship, they were essentially a wicked generation, their hearts all the while inclining them to evil, and to a forgetfulness of

Digitized by Google

the promises and fidelity of God. Corruption, therefore, was always with them more easy than obedience to the simple truth. They were a rejected and punished people; they had no gratitude to God, as they had not received his offered mercy; and, consequently, their so-called religious proceedings, at their high altars, in their consecrated groves, and in their gorgeous temples, were, at the first and ever afterward, nothing but a mockery. Their worship was a mockery in the days of Abel, and of Seth, when "men began to call upon the name of the Lord;" it was a mockery, a growing mockery, from that day to the day when the world was drowned; and it continued to be a mockery, ever becoming worse, till the establishment of the oriental pagan nations, whose particular histories and speculations were severally incorporated into their religious ceremonies, which, nevertheless, still embodied the traditionary rites coming down to them from the very gates of Eden. The germ of the two systems, of the believers and of the unbelievers, was the same; but the believers maintained the purity and true significance of the original service, adding to it only what the Author of it ordered them to add, during the gradual development of his glorious plan of saving the world by the sacrificial death of Christ; while the pagans, on the contrary, looked not to God for any additional revelations, nor preserved the purity of what they had received, but "sought out many inventions." This is what the Scriptures themselves declare upon the subject: "Lo, this only have I found," says Solomon, "that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." Thus, the original nations of the world, the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phenicians, Greeks, and Romans, as well as those less known peoples living beyond the verge of ancient history and nearly lost in the shade of their primeval barbarism, while they all retained some common rites, which were to be traced to no origin but the appointment of God at the gate of paradise, at

Digitized by Google

the time of the advent of Christ, had not only corrupted the original revelation of one God, multiplying him into as many deities as there were attributes in nature, but they had corrupted equally the true worship, invoking each god with rites adapted to his imaginary relations to mankind, and paying them all a homage, which, as witnessed in their temples, was marked by every possible significance except the right one. Remembering only, that the leading ceremony of the traditional religion was typical, they devised and practiced an endless variety of symbolical liturgies; their altars and temples were surprisingly varied in form and structure, and yet all beautiful and magnificent; their priesthood was learned, and stood out before the public in all the splendors of ranks, and robes, and a most showy ritual; their popular worship was abundantly gorgeous, but the thousand mysteries connected with their religions, which were also contrived and established on the basis of a symbolic original, embraced everything pompous, or striking, or demonstrative; their temples, the most massive and imposing structures to be found on earth, standing out upon their high places, or rising up in magnificence out of the deep shade of their sacred forests, were surrounded and filled with such statuary as has never since been seen, and covered, as to the interior, with paintings which have never been matched by subsequent ages of the most ambitious and industrious art. Every element of this pagan worship, and everything connected with it, was something created for the purpose of making a deep and lasting impression upon the senses. Not only did architecture rear for it her most costly and finished piles, and statuary cut for it her most life-resembling representatives of the departed good and great, and painting people its consecrated walls with the almost breathing images of its ideal men and gods, but oratory devoted to it her most gifted efforts, and music adorned it with her highest and richest melodies, and all the muses, and all the graces, and the

Digitized by Google

utmost that the human imagination could achieve, combined to render it grand, mystical, and impressive. But, with all this formal splendor and outward ostentation, it had no soul, no life, no religion, no real worship. It contained no personal experience; it suggested no repentance for sin, no renunciation of vice, no hungering and thirsting for moral reform; it prompted to no searching of the heart, to no seeking after good, to nothing like real trust for restoration to the promises and interposition of an almighty power. The sum total of the universe was its supreme divinity; the earth's surface was its dividing plane between the two hemispheres of creation; above this plane, every star in the heavens, every element of nature, every power and attribute of the air, was a member of the great family of its superior gods; below it, in the shadowy habitation of the dead, lay the Elysian groves and gardens of the blest, and the sorrowing regions of despair, which were presided over by an equally numerous generation of inferior deities; on the plane itself, where living man resided, there were gods of the sea and of the land, everything flowing into the one—from the largest of earth's rivers to the smallest of her rills—and everything standing or lying upon the other—mountains, hills, rocks, caves, woods, and even solitary trees—had each its representative and guardian power. All time, as well as space, was divided off into periods of deified duration, the past, the present, and the future being deities; the year, the seasons, the months, the days, and even the very hours, being named and known as divinities; and the entire cycle of eternity, itself divine, was crowded with successions, past and to come, of the historic and prophetic dynasties of gods. The products of time and space were gods. The animal, vegetable, and mineral departments of nature's productions were acknowledged as divine; every moving and living thing, from the lion to the leek, from the lava of the laboring volcano to the particle of golden dust, was sacred; and the

Digitized by Google

human race itself, with all its depravity and sin, was apotheosized, rare examples of its virtue being dispatched at death to the upper regions, and remarkable specimens of its vice being consigned to the inferior world, to supply such vacancies as might occur, while those men of more moderate but still marked pretensions remained, after their decease, to be honored as the heroes and demi-gods of earth. Every object of the universe, indeed, was worshiped by the pagan nations. Their whole round world, their heaven, and earth, and hell, were full of deities, male and female; their memories teemed, their imaginations were weighed down, with visions of gods and goddesses celestial, terrestrial and infernal; and all these were to be worshiped, nay, were worshiped, with all the pomp and splendor, and with every variety of august ceremonial, within the scope of the human fancy to conceive. Retaining just enough of the traditionary institution of sacrificial worship to give their ritual some resemblance to the patriarchal system, and helping out this similitude by borrowing a little from every new revelation to the Hebrews, whose customs were well known to every one of the leading nations of antiquity, it was nothing, after all, but a gorgeous corruption of the simple and beautiful ideal of religious worship, as always practiced, from Adam to Jesus, in the original Church of God.

The pagan and the Hebrew liturgies contained, however, the common practice of offering up living animals upon their altars as an atonement for sin; this common practice was the divinely-appointed index, for all the nations of the earth, pointing directly to the promised sacrifice of the Son of God for the transgressions of the world; and when that final offering had been slain, there was then no longer a meaning in the typical sacrifices, whether among Jews or Greeks. Animal sacrifices, therefore, should everywhere and at once have ceased; they would have ceased, had the nations, Jew and Gentile, retained the idea which those bloody rites were

Digitized by Google

instituted to proclaim; and they did cease, in every part of thew orld, with all those who received Jesus as the person so long and so universally pointed out. With him, therefore, the whole typical system came to a natural termination; he was the end of what was at first the only meaning of the pagan services; and nothing was to remain of the majestic ritual of the patriarchal church, excepting that plain and simple portion which consisted of the genuine and earnest worship of the heart: "The hour cometh, and now is," said Jesus to the woman of Samaria, "when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The several parts of this spiritual worship were clearly laid down in the example and precepts of our Lord: 1, He opened his work of bringing in a finished system of doctrine, discipline and worship, by consecrating himself in the devotional act of *baptism;* 2, He went into the synagogue of Nazareth on a certain Sabbath day, "as his custom was," and *read* to the people out of the word of God; 3, He devoted much of his time to *extemporaneous prayer*, and gave to his disciples, upon their request, a *form of common prayer;* 4, He was in the habit of addressing himself orally to the people, delivering not only short sentences and parables, but continuous discourses; he taught his doctrines in the temple, in the synagogues, on the summits of mountains, in the streets of villages and cities, by the sides of wells and of fountains, by the shores of the little inland seas of Palestine, on the bosom of those waters, in rural retreats of the wilderness, far from the noise and confusion of populous localities; and he commanded as well as commissioned his apostles to "go into all the world and *preach the Gospel* to every creature;" 5, In that memorable upper chamber, where the Church of God was completed, after partaking with his friends of the paschal feast, he brought in that correlative *feast upon a Sacrifice* known as the *Lord's Supper*, in which the substance of the word of God, both old and new, and the

Digitized by Google

central idea of both dispensations of the one religion, are exactly and strikingly represented; and 6, When all was finished, and the Founder of our faith was about to go out and deliver himself up to death, he and his apostles *sang a hymn* together, "making melody in their hearts," and thus literally laying the topstone of the glorious edifice with rejoicings.[8]

These, as established by Jesus himself, were the religious services of the apostolic Church. The Acts of the Apostles are fortunately in our hands; and in those annals is to be found the most abundant evidence that every one of these six parts of public worship was recognized by these original representatives of Christ. They baptized; they read the scriptures; they prayed, both privately and in company; they addressed the people in discourses upon the subject of their religion; they celebrated the Supper of our Lord; and they sang the praises of God "in hymns and spiritual songs," thus uniting poetry and music in their worship. So far we walk on solid ground, because all these parts of the apostolic service are distinctly mentioned in the evangelic writings; and they were also, with the exceptions only of the two sacraments, the parts of public service in the synagogues, where the spiritual portion of the Jewish worship was always separately practiced, and which Jesus and his apostles adopted and continued. The worship of the Church of Christ, and that of the Jewish temple, and that of the numerous synagogues, after taking out of them what was simply typical of a *future* Messiah, was substantially identical; and of the two Christian sacraments, baptism stood in the place of circumcision, and the supper supplied the vacancy made by the abolition of the Passover, neither of which rites could longer be kept up as tokens of the com-

[8] St. Augustine (August. Ep. 119, c. 18) defends the use of music as a part of divine worship by saying, "that we have the precept and example of Christ and his Apostles for singing in our assemblies."

Digitized by Google

ing Sacrifice, after it had been actually offered upon the Cross. Altering, therefore, what had to be altered to fit the reformed worship to the facts as they existed after the long symbolized Redeemer had appeared, Jesus took up and rendered perpetual the system of spiritual worship, which had been appointed to the first of the patriarchs, which had been handed down through all ages of the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, and which was intended to be continued to the very end of time.[3]

Such being the original constitution of Christian worship, as established by Jesus and followed by his apostles, there is no account of any alteration of it till the time when the history of the Church is very exactly understood; and the period between the apostles and Eusebius, the earliest of the church historians, is sufficiently illustrated, so far as this subject is concerned, by several passages from the most ancient of the Christian fathers. St. John was alive till near the beginning of the second century of the Christian era; his lifetime may be looked upon as marking the limits of the apostolic period; and in about fifty years from the day of his departure lived Justin Martyr, whose writings are still extant, and who gives quite a description of the Sunday services of the Church during the current and preceding generation. The first thing he mentions is the rite of baptism; and this was immediately followed by the administra-

[3] Buxtorf (De Synagog. Jud. edition of Basil, 1712) is my chief authority for this representation of the services of the Jewish synagogues. It has been a common supposition that these houses supplied the place of the temple to the people living in the rural parts of Palestine. But this is a mistake. The typical services could be performed only in the one temple of the nation, while the spiritual worship could be attended to anywhere, and was practiced by the people in their families, as well as in their synagogues. The reader will see how distinct this spiritual worship was always kept from the symbolic rites, by recollecting that there were nearly four hundred synagogues in the city of Jerusalem itself, at a time when the temple was standing, and just prior to the advent of Christ.

Digitized by Google

tion of the Supper. "The persons to be baptized," he says, "believing what is taught by us, and professing their ability to live accordingly, are instructed to pray, and (fasting) to seek of God remission of their past sins, we praying and fasting with them; they are then taken to a place where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were regenerated—in the name of the Father of the Universe and the Lord God, of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; they then receive the laving of water."[4] Immediately after the ceremony of baptism came the celebration of the Supper, which, in all places possessed of a regular and established congregation, was a part of the morning services of every Sunday: "After this," says Justin, referring to the preceding rite of baptism, "the believer is brought to where those called brethren are assembled to make common prayer for themselves, and for the illuminated or baptized persons, and for all others everywhere."[5] The old father then goes on to describe the manner of receiving the baptized to the sacramental table. Instead of being admitted to fellowship by the giving and taking of right hands, the candidate is received with what was at first known as the "holy kiss" and afterward as the "kiss of peace." He then took his position among the brethren, apart from the promiscuous congregation, when the elements were at once consecrated and distributed. The leading man of the congregation, whom Justin calls the "President of the brethren," took the bread and wine, and in some places water also, and offered over them a prayer and a benediction of "praise and glory to the Father of the Universe, through the name of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The bread and wine were then given to the communicants by those called "deacons;" and this was the end of the simple ceremony of the Lord's Supper at the middle

[4] Justin's Apology, i. [5] Justin's Apology, i.

Digitized by Google

of the second century, and within the lifetime of many, who might have been acquainted with some of the original apostles.*

Such is what the earliest Christian writer says in relation to the two only sacraments recognized in revelation; and, in the same work, he makes a general statement of the Sunday services of the Christian congregations of his day, leaving out only these sacramental ceremonies, because he had previously described them. As it is the first account we have of what was done in the public assemblies of the primitive church, immediately after the death of the apostles, the passage is exceedingly interesting and important. It runs as follows: "On the day of the Sun," says Justin, "as it is called (that is Sunday), there is a meeting together in one place of all who dwell in the cities, or in the country, and the Memoirs by the Apostles, or Writings of the Prophets, are read for a sufficient time. Then, when the reader has finished, the President makes an address, exhorting to an imitation of those good things. Afterward, we all rise together, and pray. [Here baptism was performed when

* In another place (ch. vi., p. 309) I have shown how persons were received into the apostolic church upon the simple profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Redeemer; the reader will mark what Justin Martyr says upon this subject; and he may also here add the testimony of one of the most learned of modern authors, who bases his statement upon an avowed examination of all antiquity upon the subject: "The truth is," says Beausobre, the author referred to, "that the first Christians had not the discipline which was afterward established, and did not distinguish between the catechumens and the faithful. They preached the Gospel. They who embraced it and declared solemnly that they *believed in Jesus Christ* were baptized, and were admitted *at once* to the communion of Christians. They passed from the society of the Gentiles, or that of the Jews, into the Christian Church, without any other ceremony than that of *renouncing their errors, confessing Jesus Christ, and receiving baptism.*"—Histoire de Manichée et du Manichéisme, t. ii., p. 124. This is precisely the course established and recommended by Mr. Wesley.

Digitized by Google

there were candidates to receive it.] Then, as before related, prayer being ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and in like manner the President offers prayer and thanks, according to his ability, and the people express their assent by saying Amen. There is then a distribution made of those things over which thanks have been given to each one present, and a partaking of them, and a portion is sent to the absent by the deacons. And those who are affluent and are disposed, give, as each one chooses; and the collection is deposited with the President; and with it he assists orphans and widows, those who on account of illness or any other cause are in want, those who are in bonds, strangers dwelling among us, and, in a word, takes care of all who have need." [7]

This, then, is a brief but sufficiently comprehensive account of the several parts of the religious worship of the original Church of Christ. It will be observed that the act of singing is the only one of the six parts established by Jesus and his apostles which the first of the fathers has omitted. Whether this omission was from a slip of the memory at the moment of writing, or from some carelessness of the early copyists, it is not material to determine; for it is distinctly stated by Pliny, in his celebrated letter to the Emperor Trajan [8]—the

[7] Justin's Apology, I. The old father tells us the reasons why the Christians met on Sunday for the celebration of their worship: "We meet together," says he, "on the day of the Sun, because that is the *first* DAY, when God, having wrought a change in darkness and matter, made the world, and because Jesus Christ, our Saviour, on that day rose from the dead; for the day before that of Saturn they crucified him; and the day after that of Saturn, which is the Day of the Sun, appearing to his apostles and disciples, he taught those things which we have delivered to you." The philosophic reader, besides gathering the information pertinent to the topic now in hand, will detect here the first recognition of the Gnostic corruption of Christianity, in the doctrine acknowledged by Justin of the preëxistence, if not eternity, of matter.

[8] Plin. Epist., lib. x, ep. 97.

Digitized by Google

earliest notice taken of the Christians by any pagan writer—that they "met together and sung hymns;" and there is a Greek hymn still extant, to be found at the close of the writings of Clement of Alexandria, which, in the days of that old father, who was separated from the last of the apostles by less than a hundred years, was called ancient. It is written in the Greek language; it opens with an apostrophe to Light; but it is valuable only as marking the great antiquity of singing as a prominent part of the early religious worship. Eusebius, also, the first historian of the Christians, mentions a work called Psalms and Hymns of the Brethren, which he says claimed to have been "written at the beginning."[9] Paul of Samosata, who was President or Bishop of the original Church of Antioch about half a century after the death of Clement of Alexandria, is noted in history for his attempt to *reform* the singing of his congregation; he professed the desire to *restore* the hymns and the music of his church to their original simplicity; and in this movement we see another proof of the very early use of this part of worship. Indeed, we now have the collections of hymns, in the Syriac language, as well as in good Latin translations, which were written by Bardesanes and his son Harmonius in the second century, soon after the death of the first of the fathers, Justin Martyr. Singing, therefore, notwithstanding the omission of this earliest of the Christian writers, must be set down as one of the customary services of the religious worship of the Church of the apostles; and every other of the six parts of their simple ritual is expressly mentioned by this unimpeachable authority.[10] But it is of yet greater consequence, in showing the simplicity of the original worship

[9] Euseb. Hist. Eccles., Lib. v. c. 28.

[10] In another place (Apology, p. 60, fol. Ed.) Justin Martyr mentions singing, but he is not very definite in his reference; his lack is supplied, however, by Tertullian (De Virg. Velat., c. 17, and Ad Uxor., lib. ii., c. 8) who speaks very plainly upon the subject.

Digitized by Google

of the Christian Church, that no rite, no ceremony, beside these six parts, is mentioned by this semi-apostolic author. Not a lisp of anything else comes to us from the practice of any congregation of Christians from the baptism of Jesus to the death of Justin, a period of more than a whole century, which is the pure and primitive period in the annals of our faith. It is certain, therefore, that the worship of the first Christians, given to them by their only Lord and Master, was, with the necessary transmutation of the two rites of circumcision and of the paschal feast into baptism and the Supper, a continuation of the spiritual portion of the Hebrew worship, which was handed down from the gate of Paradise, and which will remain till the earth itself, by the general diffusion of the Gospel, becomes a universal Eden.[11]

This original ritual, however, so beautiful and impressive for its simplicity, retained its purity only a little time after the primitive period I have mentioned. We find in the extant writings of Tertullian, who wrote at the beginning of the third century, and whose writings stand next in antiquity and in value to those of Justin Martyr, that the sacraments began to be tampered with during his generation. He tells us that honey and sweet milk were tasted by the candidates for baptism prior to the administration of the rite upon them. This was a Judaizing ceremony, indicating that the persons to be baptized were, by that act, just entering into the Christian Church, a new Land of Promise, another Canaan "flowing with milk and honey." When baptized, they were also anointed with oil, after the Jewish custom of consecrating

[11] Dr. Schaff (Hist. Christ. Church, pp. 119–122) reckons *confession* as one of the distinct parts of the original Christian worship, but on no authority earlier than the first of the Romanizing writers. See the recent origin of confession established by Bishop Stillingfleet, Origines Britannicæ, p. 239. Dr. Shaff, who was misled in this particular by the customs of his native land, in every other respect confirms the statement I have made on the credit of the New Testament and of the earliest writers.

Digitized by Google

priests, as if every Christian was to be literally a priest himself, according to the figurative description of the prophet. This tendency to pattern after the customs of the Jews, which had caused the first general council at Jerusalem in the days of the apostles, and which it was supposed had been rooted out by the influence of Peter and of Paul, still remained. Peter had been commanded in a vision to give up all his Jewish notions, and Paul had been called to from heaven to pay no regard to the obsolete ceremonials of his fathers, but to go out as the particular apostle to the Gentiles, binding no burdens upon them but the easy yoke of the two Christian sacraments, and the other four parts of the spiritual worship which had been given to the Christians by the example and teachings of their Redeemer. But these two apostles, as well as all their brethren, when preaching the Gospel, whether in Palestine or out of it, were compelled to resort mainly to the synagogues for their congregations and their opportunities of speaking; and the consequence was, that, for a century and more after the resurrection, the conversions to Christianity were mainly among the Jews. The Jewish influence was therefore supreme in the post-apostolic Church; and as it could not be expected that their national attachments, and the force of their education, could be broken in a moment, so it is nothing surprising that these Jewish converts should sway the successors of the apostles very strongly toward the more complicated and imposing ritual of their ancestral religion. In the country at large, they would not at first think of having anything more august than the service of the synagogues they had left; for they had always been accustomed to simple rites in their popular convocations; but they all remembered that, at the center of their native land, there had stood one structure of great magnificence, where a regularly-appointed priesthood performed the pompous ritual of their fathers; and it was natural, therefore, for them to desire to see, at some political

Digitized by Google

center of the region where they dwelt, some fabric of more than ordinary proportions, and a worship of metropolitan magnificence. Metropolitan churches soon grew up; and their ritual at once began to expand from the beautiful simplicity of the primitive age into something resembling the grandeur of the temple service. The experiment proved a success. It not only pleased the Jews, but it was equally satisfactory to the pagans, who had before complained of the want of houses of worship and of a striking ritual among the Christians, and whose taste had been educated to the most ostentatious rites; and, as concessions had thus been made to the prejudices of the Hebrew mind, the pagan converts could see no reasons why their prejudices should not also be consulted. They were consulted. The Christians, thinking that there could be no harm in adopting and spiritualizing some of the more innocent and attractive ceremonies of the Greek and Roman temples, especially for the purpose of rendering their holy religion the more acceptable to their pagan countrymen, thus bowed their knee to Baal, and opened their doors to the influx of corruption and superstition. As they had two services a day, one early in the morning, the other late in the afternoon, after the custom of both Jews and pagans, so they began to call these services the *sacraficia matutina* and the *sacraficia vespertina*, the very phrases used for the heathen and Jewish temple worship.[12] But they stopped not with the use of words. They proceeded to the adoption of Jewish and pagan ideas. Not content with the symbolic rites of baptism and the supper, by the one of which they made profession of their new birth upon entering into the household of faith, and by the other kept up a recollection of the means of that inward regeneration, they multiplied the sacraments successively

[12] Bishop Stillingfleet (Origines Britannicæ, p. 233) shows that these titles began to be used at a very early age.

Digitized by Google

into four, five, and seven. The reading of the word of God was put into the hands of professional elocutionists and made as striking as possible to the senses by the use of a great deal of ceremony in approaching and opening the sacred books. Prayer, which at the first had been mainly extemporaneous, with occasional forms for the more solemn occasions of the common worship, was made altogether in common, and in set compositions, whose chief trait was their endless repetitions. The sacrament of the Supper, so simple in the hands of its Institutor, and of his immediate successors, became a ceremony of vast proportions, made up of readings, and prayers, and benedictions, and responses, and genuflections, all in imitation of the obsolete grandeur of the Jewish and pagan temples, which, in more senses than one, might well be called a *mass*. The singing, which, according to every account left of it from the letter of Pliny to the last of the old hymnists, was originally congregational, was transformed into a separate institution, and put into the keeping of a distinct class of church-goers, after the pattern of the choirs of Solomon and of some of the more august of the Roman and Greek temples. Nor did this long satisfy the corrupters of the Church. It was not enough for them to sing the psalms and hymns pertaining to the service. They must sing also the prayers and scripture lessons, the voice of the officiating president, now called a priest after the Jewish and pagan style, leading in the cantation of these portions of the worship, while the choir led off in the psalms, hymns and chants. So surely and steadily did this work of corruption go forward, that, at the period of the conversion of Constantine, the public worship of the Christians could scarcely be distinguished, in point of magnificence, from that of the heathen and Hebrew rituals; and, to accommodate the more perfectly this showy liturgy, and to give it a theater for a more striking exhibition, this first of the Christian emperors built metropolitan cathedrals, modeled very much after the pattern of the Jew-

Digitized by Google

ish temple, at all of the central points of his vast dominions, in which the now august rites of the Church, performed by robed and mitred priests, vied with the most gorgeous religious ceremonies which the world had ever witnessed.

The inside walls of these edifices were covered with paintings of great art and beauty, representing the narratives and descriptions of the sacred history; the niches of every part, within and without, were adorned with the plastic or chiseled effigies of departed saints; the simple desk, where the President had formerly held his station when reading the word or addressing his exhortations to the people, had now become an altar, where Christ was daily to be slain, and offered, and then eaten, in the communion service; here, indeed, was the great attraction; here were assembled all the sacred relics; here were the emblematic lights and pictures of the crucified Redeemer; here sat the head of all the congregations of a province, covered with the splendid trappings of his office, presiding over the ceremonies, and waited upon by numerous bands of ecclesiastics, clad in white robes, and bowing the knee at every turn of the dazzling and deafening pageant. The simplicity of Christ and his apostles, in a word, had passed away; and the form of Romanism, with the germ of what it afterward became, had already come to occupy its place.[13]

Christianity having in this way become the religion of the Roman empire, which was still nearly universal, and it having adapted itself to the political divisions of the realm, as well as to its hereditary tastes and prejudices, it stood prepared

[13] Mosheim, Cent. ii., pt. ii., ch. iv. All writers, except the Tractarians of Oxford, agree in showing, that every element of Romanism existed in the churches at the beginning of the fourth century; and the Puseyites have not come to be acknowledged as reliable authority among scholars, either in England, or in this country. See also Bingham's Christ. Antiq. *passim*, and Isaac Taylor's Ancient Christianity, for a complete demonstration of the early corruptions of the Church.

Digitized by Google

to rise or fall, to succeed or suffer, according to the vicissitudes of the general government; and, therefore, when the empire was parted into the two grand sections of the Greek and Latin, and afterward into more numerous divisions by the breaking up of the Latin empire, the Church was compelled to divide and subdivide accordingly. Each of these divisions was left to its own intrinsic tendencies; each developed a character very much its own; each had a destiny to achieve and a work to do; and, therefore, in the further prosecution of this portion of my subject, I must follow for a moment the fortunes of each of the several general liturgies which sprung up out of this universal disintegration. By pursuing it attentively, the reader will not only refresh his memory with what every Christian ought to know, but will particularly see how much he owes to the modern spirit of the Reformation.

I. The history of the Roman ritual, from the time of the partition of the empire, is exceedingly interesting and important. It is a very common supposition that the now current ceremonial of the Roman heresy, precisely as it now appears in the Breviary and Missal of their worship, is very ancient; and the Roman writers, making as much as possible out of their great argument of being the only ancient denomination, lend all their influence to encourage this mistake. But the truth is, that, though the seeds of Popery are found in the church of the fourth century; and though these seeds were constantly germinating and maturing from that early time to the division of the empire; yet, the present constitution of religious worship among Roman Catholics grew up so slowly, that its present form may be looked upon as rather recent. It has been seen, for example, that Justin Martyr knew of but two sacraments, while the modern Church of Rome has seven. Until the Council of Laodicea, in the year 367, only portions of the Gospels and Epistles

Digitized by Google

were read, while, in after times, not only all the canonical books of revelation, but the apocryphal also, were included in the service. No use was made of what is called the *Apostles' Creed* till the year 1014; and the *Ave Maria* was introduced into the Roman Breviary after the Tridentine Council, in 1550, by the command of Pius the Fifth. So with many other portions of the existing Roman service. The *Alma Redemptoris* is acknowledged by Gavanti and Merari, among the ablest of modern ritualists, to have been the composition of one Hermannus Contractus in the year 1054; and the *Ave Regina*, the *Regina Cœli*, the *Salva Regina*, are to be found in no Breviary whatever before the year 1520. Baronius tells us that the *Officium Parvum* of the Virgin Mary was instituted by Peter Damianus in 1056; and this was not enjoined upon Roman Catholics till thirty years afterward, when it received the sanction of Urban the Second. The service of the mass itself was written by a private individual in the days of Gregory the Great, and not far from the year 585, when it was received and enjoined upon the Roman Church by that powerful pontiff. The current ritual of Rome is full of idolatrous invocations of the saints. Not one of these petitions, however, now recited by pious Romanists the world over, was ever heard of till a long time after Christianity became the national religion of the Roman empire under Constantine the Great.[14]

Whatever may have been the origin and history of the Roman ritual, however, there is no difference of opinion in

[14] Roman Catholic writers do not *deny* these facts; they only *conceal* them from the public mind; but the Tractarians of Oxford, whose enterprise is to reform the universal church *backward* to the standard of the ante-Nicene Fathers, have found it within their plan to expose the recency of a large portion of the Roman ritual; and the reader may profitably consult several of their publications, particularly their first and third volumes upon this interesting topic. Let him also consult Bp. Stillingfleet's Origines Brit. pp. 220–244, and his Origines Sacræ, *passim*.

Digitized by Google

respect to its present forms, which have been multiplied till they now fill no less than four heavy duodecimo volumes. The work is called the Roman Breviary, a word first employed for this purpose in the eleventh century; it was compiled from several similar publications on the different parts of the Roman service, such as the *Psalteria*, the *Homilaria*, the *Hymnaria*, and ordered to be used in all Roman Catholic congregations by Gregory the Seventh; and though, as has been seen, numerous additions have since been made, this Gregorian Breviary, the production of the eleventh century, contains the substance of the Roman ritual for all possible occasions. Only a general idea of this vast system of worship can be condensed into a paragraph of this chapter. The book consists of psalms, hymns, canticles, lessons and single texts of Scripture, quotations from the most noted of the ecclesiastical Roman writers, antiphons, verses and responses, sentences and collects. These different parts are woven into one general plan of worship, connected together by rubrics or introductions explanatory and directive, and illustrated by numerous historical foot-notes. The work seems, at the first inspection, exceedingly complicated, tangled, and even unintelligible; and the reader wonders how such a compilation, or any distinct part of it, could ever be brought into use among even a reading and thinking population. But by diligently studying its contents, the thread is finally discovered; the design is comprehended; and then it is seen that the contents are divided off into periods for any number of occasions, public, private, social, as well as ecclesiastical. There is to be found in it a set service for everything, from the secret devotion of a penitent to the consecration of a pontiff, which can occur to an individual, to a congregation, or to the Church universal. There is a service for every portion of the ecclesiastical year, which is cut up into exact sections, as if the sun and other heavenly bodies were faithful Roman Catholics and had nothing to do but to observe the order of

Digitized by Google

this complex worship. The feasts and fasts have their separate services; and these ferial days are so numerous, that it is difficult to find twenty-four hours together which do not embrace a solemnity of some description. There are services to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but these are comparatively very brief; while those addressed to the Virgin Mary, to St. Ann her mother, and to the semi-deified prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints, are as abundant as they are ostentatious.

There are particular services in these volumes for every day of the year, and these daily devotions are divided into seven distinct portions, corresponding to the seven sub-divisions of the day made by the Roman Catholics. The day begins at evening, as it did with the Jews; and there were at first only the three Jewish sub-divisions of the third, sixth, and ninth hours; but the pagan system observed a more numerous dissection of the day; and Romanism ultimately surpassed all competition in this respect, by setting apart seven periods and seven religious ceremonies for every daily revolution of the earth. This seven-fold division is as follows: 1. Vespers, the first hour of the evening; 2. Compline, or bed-time; 3. Nocturns, or midnight; 4. Prime, the first hour of morning; 5. The third hour of morning, or matins; 6. The sixth hour, or mid-day; 7. The ninth hour, or afternoon. Romanists insist, I know, that the old Hebrew ritual observed this same seven-fold division of the day; for David declares: "Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." They assert, too, that it is in honor of the seven days of creation, of the seven distinct petitions of our Lord's Prayer, of that Spirit which is revealed to us as seven-fold, and a memorial of the seven evil spirits against which the Scriptures give us warning. They pretend to say, also, that Jesus was born and raised from the dead at midnight; that at Prime (7 o'clock, A.M.) he was brought before Pilate; that at the third hour (9 o'clock, A.M.) he was devoted to

Digitized by Google

crucifixion; that at the sixth hour (mid-day) he was crucified; that at the ninth hour (3 o'clock, P.M.) he expired; that at Vespers he was taken down from the cross, at which time, also, of the day before, he had eaten the passover, washed the feet of his disciples, and consecrated his holy supper; and that at Compline, a corruption of completorium, he had endured the agony of the garden. They base this seven-fold division of their worship on certain facts related of the apostles. As Daniel had followed the custom of his fathers of "kneeling on his knees three times a day, and praying and giving thanks unto God," which order was always observed in the Jewish temples, so the apostles were often found there at the three daily services, which they thus perpetuated, according to the Breviary, in the Church of Christ. It was also, they continue, "at the *third* hour of the day," that the Holy Ghost came down upon them at Pentecost. It was at the *sixth* hour that Peter "went up upon the house-top to pray," and saw the vision teaching him the catholicity of the Christian Church. It was at the *ninth* hour that "Peter and John went up together into the temple," it being "the hour of prayer." After the Saviour's departure, the apostles "*continued* with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren;" St. Paul exhorts believers "to pray without ceasing, in everything giving thanks;" and on one occasion, at least, he and his friend Silas prayed in the middle of the night: "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them."

Insubstantial as are all these reasons for this seven-fold system of religious worship, drawn from a combination of Jewish customs and apostolic incidents, and not from any known instructions or practice of the apostolic Church, Romanism now everywhere, in theory at least, commands it. Practically, indeed, especially in Protestant countries, they

Digitized by Google

satisfy the requirements or the Breviary by uniting the Nocturns and Matins; so that the pious Romanist is not called from his warm bed at midnight; but he has a double service to perform very early in the morning; and from this time of the day till late in the evening, on all saint's days, and other ferial occasions, he is ordered to continue his devotions according to the forms and regulations of his ritual. Roman Catholics, however, have a very convenient custom of dispensing with the greater part of every prescribed service; it is generally thought sufficient for the worshiper to read over the first line or two of any office to obtain the benefit of the whole, and, if ever this is omitted, he has a ready way of escaping condemnation by going to the priest, who, for a fee, absolves the guilty party. On many occasions, nevertheless, the entire service of the day is punctually performed; and there is no part of Romanism, in which its departure from the original simplicity of Christianity is more apparent, than in the lengthy, complicated and pompous ceremonial of its unabridged daily worship. The seven periods of the day and night are then accurately observed, and the seven services, with all their windings and variations, are fully read, sung and chanted. Every one of these seven performances, excepting Compline, begins with the Lord's prayer and the Ave Maria, said privately, to which the Creed is added before Matins and Prime. After Compline come these three together. Every other service ends with the Lord's Prayer in private, unless another service immediately follows it. The audible portion of the daily service, beginning with Matins and closing with Compline, may be thus condensely, I might almost say, algebraically expressed:

I.—Matins, or Night Service, after One A.M.

INTRODUCTORY SERVICE.

1. Every worshiper first signs himself with the cross.
2. The priest says: "O Lord, open thou my lips."

Digitized by Google

3. The people respond: "And my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

4. Each person then signs his lips with the cross.

5. Priest then says: "O God, make speed to save me."

6. People respond: "O Lord make haste to help me."

7. Each person then signs himself with the cross from the forehead to the breast.

8. Then the priest repeats the doxology: "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

9. And the people answer: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, Amen, Hallelujah."

10. The priest: "Let us worship the Lord;"

11. After a pause it is added: "Our Maker."

12. Then the 95th Psalm is read alternately by priest and people, the form, "Let us worship the Lord—Our Maker," being interpolated before the 3d and 8th verses and the latter part of it after the 4th and 9th verses.

13. Then follows a hymn, according to the day, which concludes the introduction.

14. Then succeeds the main body of the service, which, if the day be Sunday, consists:

a. Of the reading of thirteen Psalms, viz. the 1st, 2d, 3d, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th.

b. Of the reading of some other passages of Scripture, in three parts, appointed according to the time of the year.

c. Of the reading of three more Psalms: viz. the 16th, 17th, and 18th, entire.

d. Of the reading of a passage from some Father of the Church in three parts.

e. Of the reading of three more Psalms, viz. the 19th, 20th, and 21st.

f. Then a *comment* on some passage of the Gospel, in three parts or pauses, to signify the belief in the Holy Trinity.

15. If the day be any other day than Sunday, then the following is the order of the service:

Digitized by Google

a. Monday—first, the reading of the following Psalms: the 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32d, 33d, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th and 38th; and secondly, the reading of a passage from the Scriptures, or from one of the Fathers, in three parts as before mentioned.

b. Tuesday—first, the reading of the following Psalms: the 39th, 40th, 41st, 42d, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, and 52d; and secondly, the reading, as before, of a Scripture passage, or a passage from some Father.

c. Wednesday—first, the reading of the following Psalms: the 53d, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62d, 64th, 66th and 68th; and secondly, a Scripture passage, or passage from some Father.

d. Thursday—first, the reading of the 69th, 70th, 71st, 72d, 73d, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th and 80th Psalms; and secondly, of a Scripture passage, or selection from a Father.

e. Friday—first, the 81st, 82d, 83d, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 94th, 96th, and 97th Psalms; and secondly, as before, the Scriptural or patristic passage.

f. Saturday—the 98th, 99th 100th, (sometimes the 92d) 101st, 102d, 103d, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, and 109th Psalms; and secondly, the reading of the select Scripture, or the passage from some Father of the Church, in three separate portions.

16. Then, on every day of the week, comes the *Te Deum Laudamus*, chanted with the greatest possible effect.

17. Next follow what are called Lauds, which are supposed to precede the approach of morning twilight, beginning with the Invitation as before:

Priest, "O God, make speed to save me;"

People, "O Lord, make haste to help me;"

when each person again signs himself with the cross from the forehead to the breast, after which comes the Gloria Patri as before—"Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and

Digitized by Google

to the Holy Ghost," with the response: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall, Amen, Hallelujah!"

18. Then follow the reading of four Psalms and the song of Isaiah, Moses, Hannah, Habbakuk, or Hezekiah, according to the following condensed table:

a. Sunday—Psalms 93d, 100th, 63d, 67th and the 148th, or the 150th, the whole divided into three parts by inserting the Song of the Three Hebrew Children.

b. Monday requires the 51st, 5th, 63d, and 148th Psalms, with the Song of Isaiah.

c. Tuesday, the 51st, 43d, 63d, and 148th Psalms, with the Song of Hezekiah.

d. Wednesday, the 51st, 65th, 63d, and 148th Psalms, with the Song of Hannah.

e. Thursday, the 51st, 90th, 63d, and 148th Psalms, with the Song of Moses.

f. Friday, the 51st, 143d, 63d, and 148th Psalms, with the Song of Habakkuk.

g. Saturday, the 51st, 92d, 63d, and 148th Psalms, with the Song of Moses.

19. Between these various readings, there occur appointed lessons not here represented, as they could not be inserted without a too frequent subdivision of the regular order, and the consequent confusion of the reader of these pages.

20. This service ends on all occasions, whether Sundays or week-days, with a Text or Capitulum, a Hymn, the Song of Zecharias, called Benedictus, several Collects, Invocations of Saints, and sentences following the hymn, and a concluding collect according to the season!

II.—Prime, or at the Rising of the Sun.

1. All the Introductory Services as above stated.

2. A Hymn, which is the same for every day in the year.

Digitized by Google

3. Then four Psalms, excepting on Saturdays, when there are only three.

4. Then a part of the 119th Psalm in *two* parts, vv. 1–132, to which, on Saturdays, is added the Athanasian Creed.

5. The service then proceeds with a Capitulum, or Text, explained or not, with the Lord's Prayer said privately, with a Confession of the Priest to the People, and in turn of the People to the Priest, with a mutual Absolution, with the reading of Scripture Sentences and a Collect—the same as is marked *third* in the English Prayer-Book—with a Lesson from the Book of Martyrs, with an Invocation of St. Mary and then of All the Saints, with more sentences and the Lord's Prayer, with another Collect—the same as is used in the English Church at the end of the Communion service—the whole concluding with a short lesson and select sentences of Scripture.

III.—Third Hour, or Nine o'clock, A.M.

1. Introductory service as before related.

2. A Hymn, the same throughout the year.

3. Reading of the 119th Psalm, vv. 33–80, in three parts.

4. Then a Text, with or without comment, and sentences following, with the Lord's Prayer, *privately*, concluding with the Collect for the day or week.

IV.—Sixth Hour, or Mid-day.

1. Introductory services as before.

2. A Hymn, the same throughout the year.

3. Reading of the 119th Psalm, vv. 81–128.

4. The Text, with or without comment, and sentences following, with the Lord's Prayer, *privately*, concluding with the Collect for the day or week.

Digitized by Google

V.—Ninth Hour, or Three o'clock, P.M.

1. Introductory service as before.

2. A Hymn, the same throughout the year.

3. Reading of the 119th Psalm, vv. 129–176, in *three* parts, thus reading the whole of this longest of the Psalms every day of the year.

4. The Text, generally without comment, and sentences following, with the Lord's Prayer, *privately*, concluding with the Collect for the day or week.

VI.—Vespers, or First Hour of Evening.

1. Introductory service as before.

2. Then five Psalms each day of the week, as follow:

a. Sunday—Psalms 110th, 115th.

b. Monday—Psalms 116th (in two parts), 117th, 120th, and 121st.

c. Tuesday—Psalms 122d, 126th.

d. Wednesday—Psalms 127th, 131st.

e. Thursday—Psalms 132d, 133d, 135th, 136th, 137th.

f. Friday—Psalms 138th, 142d.

g. Saturday—Psalms 144th, 145th, 146th, and 147th (in two parts).

3. Then a Text, a Hymn, and a Collect, all varying according to the day and season, there being always interposed between the Hymn and Collect the *Magnificat*, which is frequently followed by select sentences of Scripture.

4. The service ends with numerous Collects and Invocations of Saints, as was mentioned under the head of Lauds in the Matin service.

VII.—Compline, or Bedtime.

1. This service is nearly invariable throughout the year, and begins with a Blessing for the ensuing night, a short

Digitized by Google

Lesson, the Confession and Absolution as at Prime, the reading of select sentences and of four Psalms, viz. the 4th, 31st, 91st, and 134th.

2. Then a Hymn.

3. A Text, Select sentences, Song of Simeon, sentences again, closing the reading of them with the Lord's Prayer and Creed, said *privately*, and a Collect for the night.

4. The service ends with an Antiphon, or responsive chant, in praise of the Virgin Mary, and a collection of Scriptures in relation to it; and thus closes the complicated worship of the Roman daily ritual, giving to the faithful member of Christ's flock only a few hours of the night for rest, when he is again summoned to his devotions, long before the break of day, by the morning bell!

Such, reader, is a mere skeleton of the canonical daily worship of a pious Romanist in a Roman country; such it is in all monasteries and cathedrals; such it is, in theory, with all the faithful everywhere, except they neglect or shorten it as before related; and yet, elaborate and lengthy as it is, I have not been able to introduce the numerous Antiphons and Benedictions occurring continually in this system, without risking the intelligibility of it with those who may peruse this volume. I have given a specimen of the Benedictions; and I will add that the Antiphon is sometimes a sentence taken from the Psalm last read, in which the idea of the whole is supposed to be contained, and is chanted with great force by the choir both before and after each particular reading. It is more frequently, however, something composed expressly for the purpose, containing strong expressions of worship to the saints rather than to God. The following, for example, is the antiphon used in the Roman ceremonial from Advent to the Purification; and I give the original Latin, with an accompanying translation into English, that the reader may have full proof of the absolute idolatry of the Roman system:

Digitized by Google

Alma Redemptoris Mater quæ pervia cœli	Kindly Mother of the Redeemer, who art of heaven,
Porta manes, et stella maris, succurre cadenti,	The open gate, and star of the sea, aid a fallen people,
Surgere qui curat, populo; tu quæ genuisti,	Which is trying to rise again; Thou who didst give birth,
Naturâ mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem,	While nature marveled how, to Thy Holy Creator,
Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore	Virgin both before and after, from Gabriel's mouth,
Sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere!	Accepting the All-Hail, be merciful toward sinners!

From Purification to Good Friday, the following Antiphon is chanted:

Ave, Regina cœlorum!	Hail, Queen of the heavens!
Ave, Domina Angelorum!	Hail, Governess of Angels!
Salve radix, salve porta!	Hail, the Root! Hail the Gate!
Ex quâ mundo lux est orsa.	Whence to the world Light is risen!
Gaude, Virgo gloriosa,	Rejoice, O glorious Virgin,
Super omnes speciosa,	Beautiful above all!
Vale O valde Decora,	Farewell, O thou most comely,
Et pro nobis Christum exora!	And prevail on Christ for us!

A very spirited Antiphon is used from Easter to the first week complete after Pentecost:

Regina cœli, lætare, Alleluia!	Rejoice, Queen of heaven, Hallelujah!
Quia quem meruisti portare, Alleluia!	For He whom Thou wert worthy to bear, Hallelujah!
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, Alleluia!	Has risen, as he said, Hallelujah!
Ora pro nobis Deum,[16] Alleluia!	Pray Thou God for us, Hallelujah!

[16] Several Puritan writers affirm that this line stands in some places: Ora pro nobis, Dea—Pray for us, thou Goddess!—but I have found no instance of the kind and do not credit the assertion. The idolatry of the Roman worship is bold enough without the risking of doubtful statements.

Digitized by Google

The following is used between Trinity and Advent; and with this I will close the citation of specimens, leaving the curious reader to look into the Breviary itself for numerous similar examples:

Salve Regina, mater misericordiæ, vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve!	Hail, Queen! Mother of mercy! our life, sweetness and hope, hail!
Ad Te clamamus exules, filii Hevæ!	To Thee we exiles cry out, the sons of Eve!
Ad Te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrymarum valle!	To Thee we sigh, groaning and weeping in this tearful valley!
Eja ergo advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte!	Come, then, O our Patroness, thy merciful eyes turn thou on us!
Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris Tui, nobis post hoc exilium ostende!	And Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb, after this exile, show unto us!
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo, Maria!	O gracious, O pitiful, O sweet Virgin, Mary!

There is no person among those likely to peruse these pages, who does not know, from his own observation, with what wonderful effect the chants of the Roman worship are thrown in at every period of the service; but every one is not aware, perhaps, that the staple of those rapt strains consists of such stuff as I have here translated into English. The truth is, the entire ceremonial of the Breviary, and of those smaller compends of it used in the ordinary churches and chapels of Romanism, is read off in Latin, a language absolutely unintelligible to nearly every lay worshiper. The priests studiously conceal the real meaning of the words employed in their stately and impressive ritual, not only because they dare not risk their positive idolatry with a large portion of the people, but because, by this concealment, they also retain their office of representative, of mediator, of interpreter of religion, between their congregations and the supreme Object of their worship. The Scripture lessons, the

Digitized by Google

prayers, the psalms and hymns, the antiphons and benedictions, indeed everything connected with their liturgy, on week days and Sundays, and at all of the numberless fasts and feasts, are doled out in medieval or modern Latin; and the result is, that the priests, who are almost the only persons understanding it, have gradually usurped the reading of what properly belongs to the congregation, so that the most devout Romanist has nothing to do, in the daily or ferial worship of his Church, but to look on and observe the priesthood performing the service for him. Could he understand the language, it would do him no good to listen; for everything is hummed over in such a monotonous undertone, as to defy all comprehension even to the scholar; he generally spends his time, therefore, either in looking around upon the people, or in crossing himself in private, or in repeating the prayers which he has hitherto neglected; when the bell rings, however, which is the signal for special attention to what the officiating priest is saying, or rather doing, he intermits these particular devotions; he makes no extemporary prayer, his petitions having been all written out and printed; and he may attend upon this worship, and form a part of the body supposed to offer it, without ever hearing the name of God in the language he speaks and understands, and without a thought of his sins, or of the only means of his restoration to righteousness, or of that work of the heart which constitutes the ideal and essence of our religion, from his cradle to his grave![16]

[16] It must be remembered that the above is nothing but a condensation of only a small portion of the Roman Breviary; it is given as a specimen of the whole as contained in that four-volumed publication; it is the regular daily service; while the forms for the multitude of holy days, yet more pompous, perplexed and idolatrous, must be left to the imagination of such readers as have not witnessed, in Roman Catholic countries, the full-length ceremonial of Romanism. The service called *Trentaine*, for example, is marked by the repetition of the Lord's Prayer, amidst a mass of liturgical offices and the greatest display of hats, robes, books, and

Digitized by Google

II. The ritual of the Oriental or Greek division of the original universal Church, as a general thing, is but a repetition of the Roman. The oriental mind, however, was always warmer than that of the western nations; and the native glow of their common heart burns with a peculiar heat in their religious worship. The fancy of the Greeks, the leading people of this eastern branch of the Christian Church, was always more fruitful than that of any other country; their ancestral religion, as has been seen, was replete with the visions of a dreamy, speculative, and mercurial imagination; and, when converted to the doctrines of the Cross, they naturally desired to find in it a belief, a regimen, a ritual, as little as possible shorn of the splendor to which they had been accustomed. What they did not find, they added;

bells, for no less than thirty times at one genuflexion and in one monotonous hum of voices. But I must refer the curious reader to the Breviary itself. We have no thorough presentation of the Roman Catholic ritual in any of our English works on Popery. Dr. Elliott's "Delineation of Roman Catholicism" is decidedly the ablest extant statement of the doctrine and discipline of Romanism; and he is about adding to his two volumes a third on its political aspects; but his work will then need, in order to its completion, at least another volume on the Worship of the Romans. Such a volume would expose the absurdities and criminality of this great apostasy more perfectly than is possible to either of the other three departments of the subject; and there is no living man, probably, so well prepared to furnish it as Dr. Elliott. Until such a production shall appear, the reader must go to the Breviary itself, and, at the same time, consult such works as Gavanti's Thesaurus Rituum cum notis Merari, Zaccaria's Bibliotheca Ritualis, Palmer's Origines Liturgicæ, Brett's Collection of the Principal Liturgies with a Dissertation upon them, and, from these, he may go back to the great and standard productions of Amalarius, Walafridus, Micrologus, Alcuinus, and Menardus, as well as to the extant Liturgies of St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, and St. Cyril, all of which I have lying by me as I make this summary of the Roman daily worship. Bishop Hopkins promised in 1838 (The Primitive Church, p. 176) a general work on church worship, but I believe he has not yet favored the world with this production.

Digitized by Google

they were not satisfied with what the cooler Italian genius had in this line accomplished for them; they proceeded, from the moment of their separate existence as a church and people, to invent new forms, new acts, new scenes for their semi-theatrical exhibition of their faith; they could not bear a rival in the magnificence of their devotions; and the end was, that, from the date of the division of the empire to the reign of Peter the Great of Russia, a cold and calculating northerner, who reformed the liturgy of the oriental Catholicism, there was nothing to be seen on earth so gorgeous as the metropolitan worship of the Greeks.

The Greek Church still retains the seven sacraments of the Roman; and these differ from the Latin ritual only in the manner of their observance. Baptism, for instance, is administered by a triune immersion. Children are baptized on the eighth day after birth; and the sacrament of confirmation, by the holy Chrism or baptismal ointment, soon succeeds. The Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, is celebrated in the following manner: After the catechumens have been dismissed, the elements are carried round the church, on the head of the deacon, before consecration. Presently the priest prays God to make the bread and the wine the precious body and blood of Christ—first for each element separately, then for both united—making thus a three-fold supplication. Then, after some intervening prayers, he invokes the gift of the Holy Ghost; and lastly, after another similar interval, he addresses Jesus Christ our Lord, "who sittest," says the priest, "on the right hand of the Father, and yet art invisibly present with us here below: vouchsafe, by thy mighty hand, to impart to us thy most immaculate body, and thy most precious blood, and by our hands to all the people." The elements are then both administered to the deacon, and afterward to the congregation, the deacon repeating a prayer in which there is this confession: "I believe that this

Digitized by Google

is thy most pure body indeed, and that this is thy holy blood indeed." [17]

The original sacerdotal order of the Orient were as careful as their Roman brethren to occupy every point of every man's approach to God; and, therefore, the duty of penitence and the hope of pardon were by them converted into sacraments, which only an ordained clergyman can lawfully perform. Penitence prompts to confession of sin; confession of sin is followed by forgiveness; and hence, that the priesthood may stand directly in the path between the sinner and his God, and control the acts of both to its personal advantage, the repenting communicant is taught to make auricular confession to the priest, and to expect the absolution of Heaven at his hands. Thus, also, not only the connections between this world and the next, but the institutions of the existing social state, were taken into the possession of these ambitious and self-made representatives of God. As marriage is the foundation of the family, and as the family is the substance of the social organization, so no persons where the Greek Church has sway can enter into wedlock without receiving the permission and sanction of the priest, who alone is qualified to perform the service of uniting two souls in one. Every period of human life, in fact, is presided over

[17] This is the form set forth in the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom, which is in general use among the Greeks; and in the oath taken by every Russian bishop (Dr. King's Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church in Russia, p. 12) he declares that he "believes and understands that the transubstantiation of the body and blood of Christ in the holy Supper, as taught by the eastern and ancient Russian doctors, is effected by the influence and operation of the Holy Ghost, when the bishop or priest invokes God the Father in these words: 'And make this bread the precious body of thy Christ.'" The declaration of the Greeks themselves is still more emphatic: "When the priest blesses the gifts, the being of the bread itself, and the being of the wine itself, is changed into the being of the true body and blood of Christ."—*Waddington's Greek Church*, p. 44.

Digitized by Google

by the priesthood of Greece. Two persons wish to marry—they are united by the priest; children are born—they must be baptized and anointed by the priest; the children enter into the fold of Christ—they are confirmed by the priest; the parents and children are communicants of the Church—they take the elements and the virtue of them only from the priest; they commit their faults after baptism—they must offer their confession and be grateful for forgiveness only to the priest; they are not only liable to ills, but to a final sickness—they receive extreme unction, the last anointing, from the priest; they die—and they will be turned from the gate of Paradise unless buried by a priest. So, from the beginning to the end of life, men can make no approaches to God, nor form any vital connections with one another, without the intervention, authority, and sanction of the priest!

The fasts and feasts of the Greeks are more numerous than the similar occasions of the Latin Church. "Besides the Catholic Lent," says Waddington, "there is a second lasting from Whitsuntide to St. Peter's day; a third, from the 3d to the 15th of August, in honor of the Assumption; and a fourth during the forty days preceding Christmas. In the monasteries, a fifth is added, to commemorate the exaltation of the Holy Cross, which occupies the first fourteen days of September. During all these fasts, excepting that before Christmas, the strictest abstinence, even to the exclusion of most sorts of fish, is enjoined and very generally practiced." But the fasts are more than balanced by the feasts: "As every day in the year," Waddington continues, "acknowledges the patronage of some saint, so those are very numerous which claim extraordinary celebration; and on these occasions, the Greeks fail not to make compensation for extreme temperance by the opposite license. Thus their life is passed in an alternation of extravagances; and the priest who enforces the one does not much care to repress the

Digitized by Google

other. Little removed from the condition of puerile subjection, they break wildly forth when the festive season invites them, and return at its conclusion to their stated tasks of mortification and discipline. Their feasts partake, however, of a religious nature, and the saint of the day is particularly invoked to intercede with God for the forgiveness of his true worshipers, for such is the limit affixed to the adoration of saints by the Church. But the people, lively, ignorant, and superstitious, perceive not the ecclesiastical distinction; and the beings whom *they* adore have power of themselves, as well to punish or pardon transgression, as to inflict or avert the earthquake or the tempest, to poison or purify the dews of evening, to nourish the olive-tree with fresh fountains and breezes, or to blast it with untimely sterility." [18]

It is easy to see that there can be no real worship of God, according to the Scriptures, among a people paying such homage to departed mortals. But they go still further. They give the same kind of adoration to the pictures of the saints with which they profusely adorn the interior of their churches. Statues, as religious objects, they entirely reject; but pictures, they say, are only the histories of great events concentrated upon a small area and represented to the eye; and these, therefore, are consecrated with incense and burning tapers, with bowings and crossings, and with every act of a degrading superstition. It is a singular fact, however, that they will tolerate none but the rudest and most graceless pictures—pictures in no degree rising above the flat surface of the canvas—since those which stand out in relief, and maintain due perspective, resemble too much the statue, which the Greeks so unanimously and heartily condemn. One of their ablest writers dwells with evident satisfaction and confidence upon this distinction: "There is a great difference," says he, in his home-made Greek, which, to save

[18] Waddington's Present Condition of the Greek or Oriental Church, pp. 57, 58.

Digitized by Google

the time of the reader, I here translate, "between idols and pictures; for the idols are the work of man's invention; as the Apostle says—we know that an idol is nothing in the world; while pictures are only the adumbration of some real transaction, which has its substance in the world, as the pictures of our Saviour, and of the saints." [19] Whatever may be the theory of the ecclesiastical writers, that these figures are not objects of devotion, but only images to aid the mind in its approach to God, the common man remembers no such metaphysical distinction: "We are told, of course," says Waddington, "that they are not objects of prayer, but only the means to awaken recollection or kindle devotion: and in proof of this it is asserted, that the Greek is much less fruitful than the Latin Church in records of miracles performed by them. But for my part, admitting the truth of this assertion, I must still confess that, when I have beheld the peasant or the shepherd from Parnes or Hymettus kneeling before the picture of the Holy Virgin; when I have observed the relaxation of his swarthy features, and the earnestness of his attitude and countenance; I have found it hard to repress the belief, that he is in fact animated by the very same hopes and faith, in respect to the graceless figure toward which his eyes and prayers are directed, as were wont to inflame the piety of his pagan ancestor, when he worshiped before the statue of Minerva." [20]

Indeed, the Greek Catholics are as really pagans in their ritual as the loosest conception of the true ideal of Christianity will permit them to be. They make the sign of the cross; they worship the cross itself; and it is by such outward rites that they are known as different from the ancient worshipers of the gods of the classic Pantheon. A part of their popular worship takes place in their churches; a part is performed in the open air, in consecrated places;

[19] Ricaut. cap. i. 17.

[20] Waddington's Present Condition of the Greek Church, p. 60.

Digitized by Google

and a part occurs at the graves and shrines of their unnumbered saints. "The services of the Greek Church," says Waddington, "are exceedingly long and tedious. That most so, and also the most ancient, is that of St. Basil, which is believed to have been composed about A.D. 370; but it is not now used except in the Sundays of Lent, and perhaps on one or two other occasions. It is superseded by that of St. Chrysostom, which has undergone, from time to time, a variety of alterations, as anything may have been altered, or innovated, or more distinctly defined, in the doctrines of the Church. But by the word liturgy the Greeks understand only the Communion Service; and as to the rest, it *varies every day in the year* and *every part of the day;* so the whole body of the services is sufficient to fill *twenty folio volumes*, beside *one* similar volume which is occupied by directions for the use of the rest. To the study of these books the learning and ability of the priest are usually confined—not with any view to comprehend the spiritual import of their contents—but simply to acquire some facility in the art of adjusting to each day its peculiar form of prayer; and this is said to be a matter of so great difficulty, that *few even succeed in perfectly attaining it!*[21]

It must be added, that in Russia, the services are all read in the nearly obsolete Sclavonian language, while in Asia Minor they are recited in the Hellenic Greek, which not one in five hundred of the native population can comprehend: "This last circumstance," says Waddington, "would be of more importance, if the greater portion of the ritual were not so executed as to be nearly, or entirely, inaudible to the congregation; for it is read in a low, hurried, indistinct voice, and a great part of it directed to the east, in which it is not intended that the people should have any share. The origin of this practice, to us so offensive, is of course to be traced

[21] Waddington, pp. 63, 64.

Digitized by Google

to the establishment of the mediatory character of the priesthood, as if their office were rather to pray *for* the people than *with* them. But beside the reproach of indistinctness and rapidity of utterance, made almost a necessity by the length of the services, the manner in which I have seen them performed is frequently indecent and impious. I have been present on occasions when the very semblance, not of devotion only, but even of dignity and gravity, has been thrown aside by the ministers; and the wafer, which is ever received with the most profound piety, is sometimes administered with a smile!" [22]

The reader has not forgotten, however, the preacher of the golden mouth, St. Chrysostom, whose discourses were the glory of the ancient oriental church, and whose successors, it may be thought, yet atone for much of this absurdity, superstition and idolatry by their addresses from the pulpit. But alas! the degraded condition of Greek Catholicism has no such relief. Its priests have long since ceased to preach. In the place of sermons, they read from that twenty-volumed collection of ceremonies the most extravagant legends of the saints; when this work supplies them with nothing sufficiently superstitious, they have an additional and ever-ready fund of miraculous stories in another distinct publication—the *Tablet of the United Worthies*—which contains three hundred and sixty-five of these lives of fabled purity and power; and these, delivered with the most intense passion by an artful and sensuous elocution, and impressed upon the imagination of the multitude by violent appeals to the pictures with which the walls of their temples are everywhere adorned, constitute the only *instruction* which the people are permitted to receive. Here again, it will be seen, there is no religion; everything like personal piety, like a work of the heart, is lost; and there is nothing in its place but the pomp

[22] Waddington, pp. 64, 65.

Digitized by Google

of an outward worship, made up of superstitious ceremonies, which, muttered over in a language or two no longer spoken by any nation, and in tones too low and rapid to be understood, are as fruitless of all religious life, or pious emotion, as would be, for the same length of time, the blowing of the wind! [22]

III. The ritual of ancient Gaul, commonly called the Gallic, had the same origin (in the general declension of vital piety after the conversion of Constantine) with that of Greece and Rome; and it stands next to them in the order of time, as well as of historic interest, the Mozarabic or Spanish ritual being less ancient and not so important in its results. The Mozarabic liturgy, though originally independent of that of Rome, soon began to succumb to the growing influence of the Latin pontiff, and finally lost its comparative simplicity in the splendors imported from the Vatican. It shared the fate of the rituals of all the independent sees of the post-apostolic church, those of Alexandria and of Carthage not excepted, over which the Roman began to domineer in the infancy of the Christian cause. But the population of early Gaul, being mainly German, from the beginning possessed a peculiarly self-relying and independent spirit, which never permitted them to acknowledge the absolute supremacy of Rome. Though really converted to the Christian faith, and

[22] Dr. King, in the work heretofore referred to, has given a very good summary of the daily ritual of the Greek Catholics, as contained in their Breviary of one-and-twenty folios; but it is, in all respects, so similar to what I have given of the Latin worship, that I preferred to present only a general idea of its observance, and that mainly in those parts which I had purposely omitted from the Roman. The reader may obtain additional intelligence respecting the history and present condition of the Greek Church in the works of all recent travellers in Greece, particularly from the production of Dr. Rufus Anderson, *Observations upon the Peloponnesus and the Greek Islands*, to which I have been myself indebted. Dr. King, however, is the standard authority, next to the Greek Breviary itself, upon this interesting subject.

Digitized by Google

living in a sort of religious harmony with the most obedient subjects of the papacy, they nevertheless always maintained a degree of ecclesiastical freedom preserved by no other dependency of the papal power. From the days of the Pragmatic Sanction, which, in 1438, asserted the liberties of the old Gallic Church, back to those of the first missionary saints by whom the barbarians of the Rhine and the Seine were originally converted, the church of what is now the empire of France never submitted to the dictation or direction of the Roman worship. It is true that Pepin and Charlemagne introduced the greater part of the Latin service into France; but to this day there have been customs observed in the French congregations peculiar to themselves; and the entire period between Charlemagne and St. Martin, the illustrious apostle of southern Gaul, and even back to the opening of the second century, when the forests north of the Alps began to echo to the word of God—a period of not less than seven centuries—the Gallic Church had a ritual very much its own.

While it is now, after the loss of the last copy of that original liturgy of Gaul, absolutely impossible to restore all its elements, and still more impossible to reconstruct it as a whole, its general characteristics are very clearly understood; and the first thing to be said about it is, that, compared with that of Greece and Rome, it was remarkable for its great simplicity. It divided the day into two portions, instead of seven, for which it furnished a morning and an evening service. The morning service consisted of the reading of lessons, not from a prayer-book, but directly from the Scriptures, of the delivery of a sermon from a platform or pulpit, of hymns and psalms sung by the whole congregation, of three kinds of prayer, silent, private, and social, and of the two sacraments of baptism and the supper. The Scripture lessons were brief; they were read from the old Italic or Latin translation, because the language of Rome was yet a

Digitized by Google

living language over southern and central Europe; and they were not in general fixed passages, always to be read according to the day, but were mostly selected at the moment in reference to the particular occasion. The sermon was generally an exposition of parts, or of the whole, of the Scripture lessons. The psalms were those of David, but whether chanted as they stand in their prosaic form, or transposed into irregular rhythm after the fashion of some modern denominations, it is not now known. The hymns must have varied from one generation to another, as successive lyric poets gained the ascendency among the early Christians, until the appearance of those celebrated collections bearing the names of St. Hillary and St. Ambrose, which gradually took the place, over the Latin world, of all former compositions. Before and in the midst of the music came those fixed lessons from Revelation known as collects in existing churches, and they were marked as consisting of such memorable passages, fit for all times and places, as could not be neglected by Christian people. As to prayer, each believing member of a congregation dropped upon his knees, on his coming into church, and made silent supplications to God for such blessings as he most desired upon himself and upon the people with whom he worshiped. Immediately after the reading or chanting of the psalms, there was set apart another portion of time for private prayer, introduced by the form of command called *silentium indicere* uttered by the deacon, somewhat resembling, if not borrowed from, the *favete linguis* of the old Roman temples. These private devotions were entirely extemporaneous, and they were also audible, a thousand or more persons uttering their private petitions at the same moment, and without confusion, but causing such a beautiful murmur of voices as is now repeated in the Sunday school exercises of every Christian country.[24]

[24] This was doubtless a general custom in the early church, for we find Chrysostom (Hom. on Matt. xix. 4, p. 290, Ox. Ed,) condemning *loud*

Digitized by Google

Upon another *silentium indicere* from the officiating deacon, all voices were hushed at once, when the minister in the desk read a general supplication, or a series of supplications, called also *collects*, because the priest was supposed to collect the preceding prayers of the congregation—*omnium preces colligere*—into one body, which, in their behalf, he offered to the God whom he was commissioned to serve and represent. The sacrament of baptism was generally performed in the open air, King Clovis himself submitting to this mode of confessing Christ; the celebration of the Lord's Supper, administered in both its elements to the entire assembly, and with established but brief and simple forms of consecration, concluded, on all occasions, the morning services in the Gallic worship; and its evening rites were almost entirely the same as those preceding, excepting that the sacraments were always omitted, and a greater portion of time was devoted to the cheerful exercises of the choir, in which the congregation never failed to unite with great skill and animation.[25]

IV. The ritual of the Church of England, from which the system established by John Wesley sprang, was compiled originally from the old Gallic service; and this is the reason why I have taken so much time to give the reader an opportunity of making some comparison of the Gallic with the Greek and Roman breviaries, and why I next proceed to make a summary account of the existing English worship; for it is only by this thorough process that Methodism can arrive at a true self-consciousness, or prepare itself for a satisfactory justification of its rites and ceremonies before the higher intelligence of mankind.

praying in the churches under his superintendence because it marred or broke up the general worship.

[25] Bishop Stillingfleet (Origines Britannicæ, pp. 221–244) gives the substance of what is known of the liturgy of the old church of Gaul; and I refer my reader to him, and to the learned authorities which he so numerously quotes, for further information upon this portion of my general subject.

Digitized by Google

The Puritan argument against the Church of England was, and now is, that its ritual was altogether popish, it having come down to the times of Henry the Eighth of England from the hands of the Roman St. Augustin, with all the corruptions and idolatries of Rome. Even Baxter, who, as a member of the commission appointed by Charles the Second to revise the English service, ought to have known better, joins in this unjust complaint. This is now the imputation against it from the current generation of Presbyterians and Independents. The simple truth is, however, that the Gallic service, which was carried into England by its earliest missionaries, was noted over Europe for its obstinate resistance to that of Italy. As has been shown above, from the earliest introduction of Christianity into southern France to the reign of Pepin, the father of Charles the Great, the French worship was in almost every part of it different from that of other Roman nations; and Charles himself declares the fact, that his father "brought the Roman way of singing into the Gallican churches, and their offices along with it." [36]

The Roman ritual, therefore, could not have been in vogue in France before that day; and yet, it is proved by bishop Stillingfleet beyond the possibility of denial, that the old English service had reached its maturity prior to that period.

The Church of England, indeed, can offer no little claim to an apostolic origin; St. Paul himself may have preached the Gospel in Great Britain; for it seems to be very clear that Claudia Ruffina, the wife of Pudens and daughter of the celebrated Caractacus, was one of those of "Cæsar's household," mentioned by St. Paul as having embraced the new religion. This Claudia, therefore, it is likely, was at the same time a Briton by birth and a convert of the Apostle; and she could scarcely fail to encourage her benefactor to

[36] De Imag. lib. i. and Stilling. Or. Brit. p. 243, where the reader will find this fact established beyond contradiction.

Digitized by Google

visit her native land and propagate the Christian faith among her countrymen.[27] Roman Catholic historians, I know, such as Alford and the author of the Antiquitates Britannicæ, would naturally struggle to make St. Peter an earlier missionary to Britain; but the balance of opinion among English antiquarians is, as is shown by Stillingfleet, that the first British convert to Christianity was this female heroine of Martial's genius, and that St. Paul, at her suggestion, was the first preacher of the Gospel in that illustrious island now governed by another Christian woman.

Whatever may be thought of this supposition, however, there is nothing more certain than that Christianity was communicated to the Britons in the times of the apostles. Eusebius, Theodoret, and Clement of Rome are confidently cited by the English antiquarians in proof of this assertion. Eusebius says distinctly, that the apostles, after having visited the Persians, Armenians, Parthians, Indians, and Scythians, passed over the ocean to the British islands—*ἐπὶ τὰς καλουμενας Βρεττανικὰς νήσους*[28]—preaching the Gospel to the people; and from that day there was in existence such an institution as the Church of England. The country being an island, or a group of islands, lying far away from the reach of the papal arm, and having independence and power enough more than once to resist and repel the legions of imperial Rome, its ecclesiastical establishments were left to grow up and develop as best they could; and nothing was more natural, therefore, than for the congregations of Great Britain, under these circumstances, to borrow the tendencies and habits of their nearest and more enlightened neighbors of the continent. The Churches of Gaul and of Britain, in-

[27] It is possible that Martial (Lib. iv. ep. 13, and lib. xi. ep. 53) may have celebrated the wit and beauty of this first of the British Christians in his noted epigrams. Stillingfleet (Or. Brit. p. 45) speaks with a good deal of assurance to this effect.

[28] Euseb. Demonst. Evang. Lib. iii. c. 7, p. 113.

Digitized by Google

deed, professing the same doctrines, and having to defend themselves against a common paganism, could not do otherwise than live and labor together on the most familiar terms. As the two people had more intercourse with one another than with all other nations in the world, so their churches must have maintained the most intimate relations; and as France had for centuries preserved her independence of the domineering power of Rome, Britain, being still further removed from the seat of the papacy, found even less difficulty in the assertion of her self-control. Thus the two went along together; and it is known that the Gallic Church had become of such consequence, at the opening of the fourth century, that, in the year 314, a great council was summoned to meet at Arles, where at least three British bishops, it may be added, were in attendance.[29] The Christians of France and England had attained to such a measure of importance at this time, that the edicts of this first of the western councils were sent to the Roman bishop, not for his confirmation, but that he might publish them to his diocese: "What we have decreed in common council," says the epistle they addressed him, "we have signified to your Grace, that all may know what in future ought to be observed."[30] Nothing is clearer, in fact, than the original independence of the churches of England and of France. They lived in great harmony with each other; they had a common religion and a common ritual; but neither of them admitted the supremacy or received the liturgy of Rome. If England looked abroad at all for an example to emulate, it was only to her neighbors and friends across the Channel; and the Gallic Church felt a corresponding care over the success of Christianity in

[29] Orig. Brit. pp. 76–79.

[30] Orig. Brit. p. 85. Petrus de Marca (De Concord. Lib. vii. c. 14, p. 2) quoted by Stillingfleet, says that these decisions of the council were sent to the Roman bishop, "as the emperors sent their edicts to their pretorian prefects."

Digitized by Google

Britain; for when, at a subsequent period, certain false doctrines had arisen in England, the Gauls sent over Germanus and Lupus, who had been the means of much good among the barbarians of the Seine, to restore their brethren to the common faith. Germanus was at that time bishop of Paris, where there is still a street that commemorates his name; and his success was so great among the Britons, that he not only removed for the time all false theology, but established in England the ritual of his country on a more permanent basis than it had ever known before.[31]

After no little examination of this interesting subject, I find, indeed, that the learned world is almost unanimous in asserting the fact of there having been but four original and independent liturgies—the Roman, the Greek, the African, and the Gallic—each of which can be traced backward, as to some of its contents, to a period not very distant from the days of the apostles. The African I have not represented in these pages, because it so soon gave place to the liturgy of Rome, though the ancient service is said to be yet occasionally performed by the Copts of the Upper Nile. The Roman and Greek have been shown to have differed very materially from one another; and it is just as certain that the Gallic, from which the English ritual was derived, retained much of the primitive simplicity of religious worship, when the others had fallen into most of the old pagan customs of the Greek and Roman divisions of the world. One thing, at all events, is now settled beyond the chance of further controversy, that the original service of the English Church was almost entirely a repetition of the Gallic, and that it was never regarded as the product of the ritual of Rome.[32]

[31] Orig. Brit. p. 221. Archbishop Usher (De Primord. p. 843) confirms this statement of Stillingfleet.

[32] Even the Oxford Tractarians (vol. i., pp. 436–447) admit that the Gallic ritual was very unlike that of Rome, and that the English was taken from it.

Digitized by Google

It cannot be denied, however, that Roman customs, rites, and ideas gradually found an entrance into the English liturgy, after France and the whole of Western Europe had fallen before the growing influence and power of the Roman see. Bishop Stillingfleet, it is true, closes up his learned discussion of the origin of the British Church in a style of triumphal exultation: "From which discourse it will appear," he says, "that our Church of England hath omitted none of those offices wherein all the ancient churches agreed; and that, where the British or Gallican and Roman differed, our church hath not followed the Roman, but the other; and, therefore, our dissenters do unreasonably charge us with taking our offices from the Church of Rome."[33] So far as the general structure of the English liturgy is concerned, this self-gratulation is founded in historic truth, but to make the boast of any considerable value, the able prelate should have shown, that the papal ceremonies admitted into the old British service in the middle ages had been entirely excluded by the Reformation. This, however, was a task which he might well decline to undertake. He very well knew, indeed, that the ablest writers of his church confess the existence of a great deal of papal corruption in the English ritual before the reign of Henry the Eighth of England: "Before the Reformation," says Wheatly, in his standard work on the Common Prayer, "the liturgy was only in Latin, being a collection of prayers made up partly of some ancient forms used in the primitive Church, and partly of some others of later original, accommodated to the superstitions which had by various means crept by degrees into the Church of Rome, and from thence derived to other churches in communion with it, like what we may see in the present Roman Breviary and Missal."[34] Should not the exulting

[33] Or. Brit., p. 244.

[34] A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, p. 22.

Digitized by Google

bishop have informed us, what became of these popish elements after the Reformation? But the facts of the case are open to all interested in the question. In the year 1537, as the world knows, a committee of the Convocation published the first attempt at a reformed ritual of the Church of England under the title of "The Godly and Pious Institution of a Christian Man," which, with all its improvements upon the older service, still retained the Ave Maria, the Seven Sacraments, and many similar relics of the Roman worship.[35] The committee nominated, in 1540, by Henry the Eighth himself, after laboring together till the February of 1543, accomplished but little more than to republish the above work in the language of the country, the first edition having been in Latin.[36] King Edward the Sixth, not being satisfied with the works of his predecessor, in 1547, appointed a new committee, who first compiled a communion service, and then proceeded to the greater task of revising the entire English liturgy, which, in its new form, was ratified by an act of parliament as a work brought to *perfection* "by the aid of the Holy Ghost."[37] In less than three years, however, the exceptions at once taken to the retained extravagances and idolatries of Rome, prevailed on the king to make another revision; and this time the learned Bucer and Peter Martyr were called in from Germany to aid in the reconstruction of the English ritual. It is acknowledged now by the more candid of the English ritualists, that this revision was a revolution backward, and the work was rejected, in 1551, by the British parliament.[38] Queen Mary followed Edward, and restored the old forms of worship. Elizabeth, not venturing to risk too much with a yet semi-

[35] Bishop Atterbury's Rights of an English Convocation, pp. 184–205, and Wheatly's Common Prayer, p. 23.

[36] Wheatly, p. 23.

[37] Wheatly, p. 25.

[38] Wheatly, pp. 25–26 and Strype's Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer, pp. 52–210.

Digitized by Google

popish people, instead of restoring the first and more primitive of King Edward's publications, republished and sanctioned a slightly revised edition of the second, which contained the offices of the seven sacraments, of confession and absolution by the priest, and an ambiguous declaration of the real and essential presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements.[39] The Elizabethan liturgy, with only small alterations and additions, continued through the reigns of James and Charles the First; but Charles the Second, to please the Puritans, appointed a new committee, who were authorized to revise the book then in use, but "to avoid, as much as possible, all unnecessary *alterations* of the forms and liturgy wherewith the people were altogether acquainted, and had so long received in the Church of England;" but this commission, composed about equally of Episcopal and Puritan divines, could not agree upon any revision whatsoever; and so, the bishops having recommended a few verbal alterations, which were at once adopted by both the parliament and the convocation, the second Prayer-Book of Edward the Sixth, from which many of the old Gallic forms were excluded, and into which many ceremonies, rites, and prayers of papal origin were introduced, was acknowledged by law, in 1661, as the established liturgy of the Church of England, from which there has since been no departure.[40]

It would be a useless labor to portray the daily services of the Church of England. It is read in the English language and is therefore known to every one likely to be a reader of this volume. Close observers, even when not possessed of the means of a critical comparison of it with its predecessors, have not failed to witness in it a general resemblance to the Roman. In the first place, it is all read from printed forms, there being no place in it for extemporaneous prayer. It is

[39] Wheatly, pp. 26–28.

[40] Wheatly, 28–30.

Digitized by Google

also exceedingly lengthy, and, to most persons, tedious. It is repetitious, the daily service being nearly uniform for every day of the year. It is exclusive, and tends to the production of an exclusive and narrow spirit, one of its creeds, known as the Athanasian, making the reception of its own form of devotion essential to salvation: "Whosoever will be saved," says that instrument, "before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith, which faith, except every one so keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly; and the Catholic faith is this:" then comes the body of the creed, nine-tenths of which consists of an explanation of the unfathomable mystery of the trinity! In the doctrine of absolution it sets forth and maintains the central idea of popery, the germ of the whole papal system, claiming for the priesthood the power to forgive sins: "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live, and hath given *power* and *commandment* TO HIS MINISTERS *to declare and pronounce to his people*, being penitent, THE ABSOLUTION AND REMISSION OF THEIR SINS." It has professedly excluded the worship of the saints, but it continues the nearly equal custom of paying special adoration to God on their days; for the philosophical Romanist claims to worship God in their *name;* the English churchman does it in their *honor;* and if there is any theoretical difference between the two acts, it must certainly be rather small. This recognition of the saints in the English ritual is very marked, it containing the names of sixty-eight of them, and there being no less than one hundred and forty-seven days of every year set apart for particular services connected with their lives. The English ritual enjoins, also, eighty-one days for feasting, and one hundred and seven fasts, being six more than one for every alternate day of every year. It reduces the number of the sacraments to two, but at the same time appoints prayers and other ceremonies for

Digitized by Google

the five others acknowledged by Romanism, calling them *offices* instead of *sacraments*, and yet making them too much the memorials of what they were intended to replace. The full liturgic service of the Church of England, in fact, as witnessed in its real dimensions in the Episcopal congregations of Great Britain, excepting only that it is read in English, is scarcely distinguishable from that of the neighboring Roman chapels, there being in both the same attention to priestly habits, the same reading of everything connected with it, the same pomp and ceremony in every part, the same address to the imagination through the senses, and the same want of that real devotion of the soul witnessed in every truly pious congregation, which, according to the animus of vital Christianity, and from the impulse of a heartfelt experience, worships the Father in spirit and in truth.[41]

V. The Wesleyan movement, it will be remembered, began within the bosom of the Church of England; its founder, and its first adherents, were members of that religious body; they were all of them accustomed to its appointed service; and the consequence was, that, while connected with that organization, they religiously observed its forms, and prepared a ritual for themselves after their separation. The Wesleyans of Great Britain are somewhat more liturgic in their daily worship than their brethren of this country; but in both, as well as among all Wesleyan Methodists the world over, the general principles and characteristics of devotion, public, social, and private, are almost identical:

1. It has been seen that Methodism was a movement, and is now an organization, based upon the personal experience of religion in the heart of all its members; and the theory

[41] Wheatly (pp. 52–78), confesses that the Romish saint-days are still retained in the English liturgy, though they are not celebrated with any special services; but the Oxford Tractarians see no reason for this distinction between the two lists of saints.

Digitized by Google

is, therefore, that every one of these members, male and female, renders thanks to God continually, and in all places, either silently or audibly, for the work he has wrought within them. They are supposed, indeed, to live a life of prayer and supplication, that this power of God may be kept alive within their hearts, and that it may be imparted to every other member of the human family. They are not only to be in this frame of mind generally, but are to have particular times and seasons for special outpourings of the soul. As every one of them professes to have been made the temple of God, dedicated to the perpetual adoration of his Maker and Redeemer, so in the heart of every one, which is his inner temple, his holy of holies, there is always to be kept up a sensible indwelling of the glorious Shekinah, whose ring of light between the two cherubim of Faith and Reason is ever to be preserved burning and responsive to every act of heartfelt worship. Mental prayer, therefore, is to be incessant, the individual being supposed to be always in a frame of mind prompting to actual supplication. This condition of the soul will also seek opportunities of particular devotion; and, therefore, there will be (with the living Christian) places and times of secret intercession. As every person is in some way connected with a family, and as there are in the family certain seasons more than commonly suggestive of our indebtedness to the goodness and long suffering of God, in the gift of this inward life, and in the preservation of it against the natural results of our misconduct, so every one who feels the stirrings of this interior impulse will consecrate those special seasons, such as the hours of rising and going to rest, and when the daily bread asked of God is received and eaten, to such services as are best adapted to the household altar. In the smaller circles of society, also, as well as in the public congregation, every person of this vitalizing spirit of religion will see numerous occasions for that sort of prayer that springs up spontaneously from this internal fountain of devo-

Digitized by Google

tion. The greater part of all the worship, which an experimental Christian feels prompted from within to pay to God, is of the same spontaneous character. Such is the variety of circumstance, situation, and condition, and such are the incessant changes in all these respects going on at all times about and within us, that no book of prayer, were it as voluminous as the Greek and Roman Breviaries united, or even as a public library, would be ample enough to meet the multitudinous and fluctuating demands of this part of religious worship. Nor could any precomposed form of prayer, written without the possibility of knowing the precise character of events, in individual or social life, which had not been actually developed, fail many times to fall upon the worshiper as irrelevant, insignificant, without any pertinence whatever to the events as they would seem while actually transpiring. This is as true of public as it is of private worship. No clergyman can tell beforehand the precise condition of his future congregation. His people are always in the act of some transition, either going forward in religious experience, or going backward, or in a state of doubtful fluctuation. The time of the year, the changes of the weather, the health and sickness of his flock, and a thousand changeable particulars of their daily course, have to be taken into consideration, and deserve to be brought into the body of his public and social supplications. He never can tell precisely what they will want, or what he will need, till he and they meet face to face in the actual performance of their common work of worship. Much less can one clergyman, or any number of clergymen, whatever may be their piety or experience, foresee what another clergyman will want in his particular and therefore peculiar field of labor. No man, consequently, and no company of men, have the prescience to write out forms of prayer suitable for all possible occasions, whether for themselves, or for other persons. It is still more impossible for one generation of men to precompose the entire worship

Digitized by Google

of a coming generation. Every man, with all his connections to the social state, is mostly an individual; every particular society of men is mainly an individual society; every generation of mankind is almost wholly an individual generation; the individual man, the individual society, the individual generation of mankind are all the while in a condition of change, of transition, it may be of progress. This individuality must pray; it must have its own peculiarity of prayer, or pine for the want of needed sustenance; it must have a worship springing chiefly from its own conscious state, growing with its growth, and changing with its varying fortunes, or the form of devotion will soon be but the shell in which the animating life has perished and become extinct. This individual worship cannot be precomposed, because the occasions of it cannot be foreseen. The fathers might as well have undertaken to write our sermons for us, as to compose for us a body of devotion, incapable of the slightest variation. The student of patristic literature falls in with frequent discourses against the theology, the morals, and the habits of the old Greek and Roman pagans, at this day as forgotten a set of topics as any that can be mentioned. Our ministers might now as well reproduce these homilies of Ambrose, of Cyril, of Chrysostom, before their several congregations, as to spend all their breath in reading the liturgies prepared by these ancient doctors. They themselves, indeed, were not so particular to follow such prescriptions. There is a great difference of character and of contents among the most ancient of these liturgies. Each grand division of the Roman empire, each capital of a province, each important city, in the olden time, had a ritual peculiar to itself. Scarcely did any two leading congregations entirely agree in their forms of worship; and yet, until the introduction and establishment of the Roman Breviary, and in some parts of the world, as in Gaul and Britain, for several ages afterward, there existed this general custom of devoting the larger portion of

Digitized by Google

the time of public worship to that individual, spontaneous, extemporary prayer, which springs so naturally from a genuine experience of a heartfelt religion."[42] It is a well-known historic fact, indeed, that there was no written liturgy in the Christian world until the time of St. Basil, nearly three hundred years after the death of the latest of the apostles. Up to that period, therefore, nearly all the prayers of public worship must have been extemporaneous, the only exceptions being the Lord's Prayer, and such few simple forms as each congregation would naturally fall into in the celebration of those rites, which, in their nature, admit of no variation. The same was true of the original Hebrew worship; for Buxtorf tells us that the greater part of it was extemporaneous until the founding of the Great Synagogue, a few centuries before the advent of Christ: "Be it known to you," says the Rabbi Bechai, quoted by Buxtorf, "that, from the time of Moses to the men of the Great Synagogue, there was no certain and equal order and form of prayer among the Israelites, but every one arranged his own prayer, and delivered it according to his individual knowledge, wisdom and eloquence, until the men of the Great Synagogue came, and prepared this prayer called Schemoneh Esre, in order that the Israelites might have an equal and common form of prayer."[43] It is equally well known, too, that, it was at this time that the Jewish nation began to settle down into the backslidden condition, which continued till the coming of the Saviour, and which necessarily followed this reduction of all free worship into the bondage of written forms. In the same way, the Church of Christ could say, in the words of old Tertullian, from the day of its establishment to its general decline after the conversion of Constantine the Great: "We pray without

[42] Bishop Stillingfleet (Orig. Brit., p. 230) admits this statement in that very work which he wrote for the purpose of establishing the antiquity of the English forms of worship.

[43] Synag. Jud. Tert., ed. A.D. 1712, cap. 10., p. 207.

Digitized by Google

a monitor, because we pray from the heart." [46] It is not my design to infer from these historic facts, however, that it was the settling of the original religious worship of the Church into liturgic forms that caused the decline from which it did not recover till a very recent period. The liturgies were not the cause, but the consequence, of that general decline of the apostolic spirit. They are the monuments that mark its beginning and its consummation. So long as the original fervor of religion remains unabated, forms for individual worship will not be needed, as the thought and feeling of the worshiper will be sure to flow forth in the most natural and spontaneous expression. Nor will any forms in such case be sufficient to hold the exulting, daring, venturous spirit of devotion. It will overleap all bounds, and fly to its mark with the speed and momentum of an instinct. When cooled, however, and bereft of its native force, the soul submits to a liturgy as a lame or impotent man leans upon his crutch; and by use the crutch becomes at length so necessary, that the sufferer could scarcely limp along without it. The natural language of devotion, however, is that which comes freely from the heart when drawn to God by that attraction, which always exists between weakness and strength, between penitence and pardon, between want and plenty. Prayer, in other words, is naturally extemporaneous; it thus utters most correctly the genuine emotions of the soul; it thus adapts its utterances the most perfectly to the varying condition and circumstances of the worshiper; it thus comes forth with a truer reality and a greater warmth and energy of purpose; it thus commends itself, and the objects for which it seeks, the most universally to the general taste of mankind, making the religion with which it is instinct to be more popular and impressive. This, at all events, seems to have been the judgment and the experience of the apostolic Church;

[46] Tert. Apol., c. 30.

Digitized by Google

it was the judgment and experience of the universal Church till it began to be overshadowed by the dark clouds of popery; it was the judgment and experience of the Gallic and British Churches for centuries after the rest of the world had fallen before the influence of Roman superstition; and it was the judgment of John Wesley, confirmed by the experience of universal Methodism, which, to this cause, owes a large part of that wonderful popularity and success, which have attended it from its first inauspicious beginning to its present position of power, if not of triumph.[46]

2. Methodism, however, being an attempt to restore the ideal of primitive Christianity, and not a reformation based on logical demonstrations, while it admitted the naturalness and superior value of extemporaneous prayer, as the general custom of individual and of social worship, at the same time adopted forms of devotion for all those fixed occasions in which the personality of individuals is lost in the common sentiment of a congregation, and where the very object of the ceremony is to enshrine and preserve an idea beyond the possibility of change; and if my reader will here take the pains to consult the ritual of Methodism, as contained in the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, and the similar publications of the denomination in other countries, he will see how carefully the fathers of the system discriminated between what is individual and what is common, between what must always be variable and what in its very nature was intended to be fixed, in religious

[46] Bishop Stillingfleet (Orig. Brit. pp. 221–244) settles the extemporaneousness of the original worship of the Church, not only in Gaul and Britain, but over Europe, beyond a question; and with him agree nearly every ecclesiastical historian and critic of the first eminence; but I will particularly refer to Bp. Hopkins of the Protestant Ep. Church of the United States (Prim. Church, pp. 164–185) who seems to think that both modes of prayer, the extemporaneous and the formal, were practiced from the days of the apostles.

Digitized by Google

worship. The individual and therefore variable part of worship, whether performed in private or in public, by one person or by a numerous congregation, is that which expresses the daily life of those who offer it. The common and fixed portion, on the other hand, is that which embodies, perhaps I may say incarnates, the two sacramental acts enjoined upon every professing Christian, and which were intended to be perpetual and unchangeable to the latest generation of the world. The one has this peculiarity, that it can be performed by any person, under any circumstances, at any time, and in any place where Providence may cast his lot. The other as positively requires the coöperation of the Church, it being impossible for an individual to baptize himself, or to administer to himself, unless he happens to be a clergyman, the sacrament of the Supper. Nor do I think it would be scriptural for a single clergyman thus to receive this latter sacrament; for the Lord himself partook not of it alone; and in every part of the ceremony, where he administered it to his disciples, and which was doubtless a pattern for all ages of the Church, he constantly employs the plural pronouns, as if he set apart this rite for the common use of his followers in all coming time. Baptism and the Supper, therefore, are settled and determined institutions; they have no such thing as development; they have no variation in their purpose or significance; they are plainly adapted to no private performance, but to a public and common use; and it therefore results that fixed forms are not only permissible but almost essential to the integrity, perpetuity and uniformity of their observance. Indeed, I see not how an entire congregation, varying from a few persons to a multitude, could adequately unite in ceremonies intended for the simultaneous coöperation of every believer in it, without their first agreeing upon some particular way, and upon some set of words, for their common guidance; and if some way must be agreed upon, and certain words must be chosen and received, they may as well

Digitized by Google

be written out and read, as kept in the mind and recited by a common recollection. A precomposed prayer is nothing but a petition once in the mind only, then remembered, and finally written down and printed; the printing of it works no alteration of its character, but only prepares it for the use of many individuals at once, and fixes it as it is for as long a time as it may thus remain; and nothing, therefore, could be more germane to the intention, the meaning, and the proper observance of the two established sacraments of the Church of Christ, than some forms of devotion, such as have been connected with them from the beginning to the present day.

Whatever may be our reasonings upon this subject, however, it is historically clear, that the two Christian sacraments have had their set forms of observance from the earliest period in the history of our common faith. It is well known that Jesus and his apostles performed these sacraments; Jesus was himself baptized, thus setting an example which his disciples followed; he instituted and ate of the Supper with his disciples; these two acts must have been performed according to some particular manner; and this manner, in each case, though not written out in scripture, must have been handed down by common custom from one generation to another. Precisely the same words would not be remembered in every case; the people of different and distant places and of mutually unintelligible languages, would suffer some variations to arise from the original pattern; and these variations, trivial but numerous, would afterward fall into a certain small number of distinct rituals, as the great sees began to extend their controlling influence and power over their suburban churches. This is the actual course taken by the rites connected with these sacraments, according to the revelations of undoubted history; and the learned, therefore, have been able to classify the unnumbered liturgies of the primitive age under the four generic forms, which, however, have so many

Digitized by Google

resemblances as to show them to have been derived from one older and common source.

The proof of their great antiquity is remarkable and interesting.

The oldest of the four is that known as Basil's, a manuscript of which was discovered by Montfaucon, in the Barbarini library at Rome, and which was found to be identical with the one quoted and subscribed to by two hundred and twenty-seven oriental bishops at the Council of Trullo, which is known to have been held in A.D. 691. The liturgy there quoted and consented to was called, by the decrees of the Council, St. Basil's liturgy; it is certain that St. Basil wrote a liturgy three hundred and ten years prior to this Council; it is certain that that liturgy was generally used in the Greek churches from the time it was composed till the sitting of the Council; and thus the chain is complete between the Barbarini manuscript, which still exists, and the old Greek ritual of St. Basil, whose works were published but a little more than three hundred years after the probable decease of the apostle, John. Such is the antiquity of St. Basil's liturgy, in which the two sacraments are celebrated by fixed and acknowledged forms.

The reader of ecclesiastical history will remember that, at the Council of Chalcedon, which sat in A.D. 451, the sect known as Monophysites was condemned, since which time they have maintained in Judea, Mesopotamia, Syria, and the southern parts of Asia Minor, a separate existence from the orthodox Christians of those countries, following the ritual which they say they had always before that used. This ritual they still read in the Syriac language; it has also been recently discovered, that in the communion service, it agrees exactly, expression for expression, with the service yet preserved and read by the orthodox church now existing at Jerusalem; and it is a curious fact, that these orthodox Christians of Jerusalem claim that their liturgy has con-

Digitized by Google

tinued with them from the days of the apostles, their tradition ascribing it to St. James. In this, too, the two sacraments are administered according to fixed and preëstablished forms.

In the ancient patriarchate of Alexandria, which embraced the whole of northern Africa, the Monophysites now use a ritual printed in the Coptic language, which calls itself "the liturgy of St. Mark which Cyril perfected;" while it is certain that, as late as the twelfth century, the orthodox Christians of the same region employed a liturgy which they ascribed with equal assurance to St. Mark; and it is a yet more striking fact, that, in a remote convent of Calabria, inhabited by oriental monks of the order of St. Basil, the settled enemies of the Monophysites, a Greek manuscript has been found of the tenth or eleventh century, entitled the Liturgy of St. Mark, which, from the nature of some of its prayers in relation to the falling and rising of the Nile, was evidently prepared for the use of the old church of Africa. And here again the two sacraments are observed in accordance with a settled form.

The Roman missal, on the other hand, which contains the papal service of the Supper, is known to have existed, in its present shape, not more than eight hundred and sixty years; but earlier forms of it can be traced with great clearness to the reign of Pope Gregory the Great: and the communion service of this pontiff, dating before the year A.D. 596, professes to have been only a revision of an older form authorized by Pope Gelasius, A.D. 497. A manuscript copy of this Gelasian communion service was found by Thomasius, in the seventeenth century, in the library of the queen of Sweden. Another manuscript communion service exists, which the ablest antiquarians have decided to have been the Roman Sacramentary of the times of pope Leo the Great, who was a member of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. It was found in the library of the Chapter of Verona; and, after

Digitized by Google

severe and frequent examinations, its claim to this great antiquity has been generally acknowledged by the learned. This ritual is ascribed, of course, to the authority of St. Peter; and it contains the offices connected with the principal sacrament in a written and settled form."[46]

The simple truth is, without touching at all the traditions by which these several forms of the sacramental services are ascribed to the apostles, that they can all be fairly traced to the fifth century, and one of them to the fourth; and then, it may be added, no earlier date can be pointed out when it can be positively or even probably declared, that similar or at least some sacramental forms were not employed in the celebration of these fixed rites of the Christian Church. History goes backward in its researches till it can go no further; but there, amidst the glimmer of those early times, we behold these preëstablished forms; and when it is considered how difficult it is to impose new institutions and customs upon any established organization, it is at least rational to infer, that, whatever alterations or additions these rites may have suffered in their transmission through three centuries of time, there must have been some forms in use on

[46] Dr. Brett (Collection of the Principal Liturgies, etc., with a Dissertation upon Them, London, 1838,) gives us translations of the communion and baptismal services of all these ancient rituals; and the dates and histories he assigns to them are generally admitted by the learned, and even by the Oxford Tractarians (Tract 63d) who are jealous of all ecclesiastical researches but their own. See also Stillingfleet (Orig. Brit. pp. 237–241) and a good article in the Christian Examiner, vol. xxxvii. pp. 350–370, for Nov. 1844. Wheatly (Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer), Biddulph (Essay on Select Parts of the Liturgy of the Church of England), Mosheim (Ecclesiastical History), Schaff (History of the Christian Church), Bishop Bull (on the Ancient Liturgies), Bishop Hopkins (Primitive Church compared with Protestant Episcopal Church of the Present Day), with many similar works, as well as the works of the Greek and Latin Fathers so far as they relate to the subject, have been constantly employed in the composition of this portion of the current chapter.

Digitized by Google

which these subsequent sacramental services were based. There is no man living, indeed, who can mention a solitary period since the days of the Saviour, and then knowingly declare that, at that period, no such forms were used. Nor can any man mention a period, from the date of these early liturgies to the present moment, when forms of this character have not been employed. It is well known, that John Calvin was the only one of the Lutheran reformers, and the first man in the history of the universal Church, who undertook to reduce all the services of religious worship to the extemporaneous method; and yet Calvin himself, in after years, not only acknowledged the indefinable antiquity of formal rites, so far as the two sacraments are concerned, but he proceeded so far as to compose a liturgy for the use of those of his followers, who preferred this style of performing these sacred acts. John Knox also prepared a liturgy for the Presbyterians of Scotland; Baxter wrote one for the Puritans of England; and some of the Puritan churches of the present day, in England and in the United States, have returned so far on the highway to Rome as to go through with their entire public worship according to printed forms. The Puritan churches generally, however, both Orthodox and Unitarian, not only have no written forms of prayer, even in the celebration of the sacraments, but resolutely condemn formal worship of every sort as altogether popish. They forget that the existence and use of forms can be traced to a period when there never had been acknowledged by the Church such a personage as a pope; and they forget that the Lord's Prayer, at least, always existed in a written form, and that it was always repeated as we find it in the sacred books. Formal prayer, indeed, is as old as the Church itself. Not only was the Lord's Prayer prescribed by the Author of the Church, but there is certainly one instance on record, in that historic summary of the apostolic Church known as the Acts, when the disciples united in common prayer. The inspired

Digitized by Google

account of the transaction is, that Peter and John, when dismissed from the council of priests by whom they had been arraigned and threatened for preaching in the name of Jesus, "went to their own company and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when *they* heard that, they lifted up their voice to God *with one accord*, and said: 'Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;' who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, 'Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ;' for of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed (both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together) for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done: And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." This is the exact language of that apostolic prayer. It was uttered at once, on the coming in of the two apostles, by the whole congregation of the Church of Christ, with one "voice" "with one accord," and must therefore have been imparted by immediate inspiration, or followed a set form previously prepared, but was in either case a form of common prayer."[47]

It is positively certain, indeed, that forms of prayer were used by the Christian Church from the very day of its origin; and it is equally true, that these forms were at first employed only on the most solemn occasions, such as the

[47] Wheatly (Rational Illustrrtion of the Book of Common Prayer, p. 10) thinks the disciples here used a precomposed form; but Bp. Jebb (Sacr. Lit. p. 132) supposes it to have been "poured forth at once by the whole Christian people under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit."

Digitized by Google

administration of the sacraments, leaving the ordinary worship of every congregation to be extemporaneous. Nearly every one of the most ancient fathers looked upon the Lord's Prayer as a form appointed for the whole Christian world; and they also regarded the prayer of the apostles, at the time of the liberation of John and Peter, as an authority for the precomposition of other prayers for times and seasons more than commonly important; but it is now very clear from all that can be gathered of the primitive era of the Church, that all the formal petitions were originally connected with the sacramental services of Baptism and the Supper. The very names of the earliest liturgies are enough to demonstrate this fact; for they were not at first called by any title which could make them cover or include the whole of public worship. All the works of this character, from their first appearance to the times of Pope Gelasius, were entitled *sacramentaria*, being thus evidently designated as collections of religious offices to be used in connection with the sacraments, which, at the beginning, were only the two which have been mentioned; and the compilation of Gregory the Great, who has been seen to have revised and enlarged the Roman ritual, was styled by him the Roman Sacramentary. This work, it is true, as well as some of its immediate predecessors, multiplied the number of the sacraments, and extended the formal worship over a large part of the time of public service originally set apart for extemporaneous devotions. The name remained while the thing called by it had grown and changed; and when, in process of time, the entire service of Romanism had become formal, and there was no longer a distinction between the styles of sacramental and of ordinary worship, the works containing this system of written devotion were still known as *Sacramentaries*, just as the old classic name of *Consul* remains in use, while the office it points out retains not a vestige of what it was when the word was first employed. We have seen, therefore, what

Digitized by Google

proof there is that the greater part of the public services of the Church, in its earliest days, was spontaneous, unpremeditated, unwritten; we have seen, however, that a part of it was always formal; and this name of sacramentary, given to the first compilations of written prayers, is a sufficient demonstration that the formal portion was that which was used in the administration of the sacraments, and that all the rest of it was left to the guidance and inspiration of the moment. That this was the original distinction between the extemporaneous and the formal parts of worship, is further evident from all that is known of the old Gallic ritual, as ancient as any ritual known in history, copies of which existed up to the days of Petavius, and of which there are numerous fragments remaining to the present time, but not a fragment which did not evidently form a part of the celebration of the sacraments. There is no proof in the world, indeed, that the old Gallic ritual, which grew up independently and *ab origine* from the practice of the apostles, contained a solitary prayer not connected with the sacramental service. The same thing is true of the service of the original Church of England, of which there is not a scrap existing, which could have had connection with anything but the administration of these several rites. The inference is resistless, therefore, that no other written offices were used in the British and Gallic churches; and this is the same thing as to say that none were given to them by those who established these churches in the very age of the apostles. The history of the British, Gallic, and Roman rituals, indeed, come together in the common declaration, that, originally, the ordinary worship of the people in every Christian congregation was extemporaneous, and that the sacraments were administered by forms previously written for the purpose.[48]

[48] Orig. Brit. pp. 221–244. It is singular that Mosheim, (Eccl. Hist. vol. i., part ii., sec. vi., p. 45), in pretending to give the order and substance of the original Christian worship, omits altogether the Lord's Sup

Digitized by Google

If the reader will now look, even for a moment, into the ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, which follows the *animus* of universal Methodism, he will see that, complimentary as it may be to the sagacity and learning of its authors, it makes precisely this same distinction between the two portions of religious worship. There are forms for the rite of baptism; there are forms for the celebration of the Supper; these forms are prescribed and enjoined for the common use of all congregations on all occasions; and these are the only forms positively enjoined, some occasional offices being only recommended, both ministers and people being thus left free to perform every other act of worship, private, social, public, according to the impulses of that inner life, which constitutes the substance of religion, and is the central force that has given existence, and system, and success to their religious movement. These forms are borrowed, not from Romanism, as our unlearned opponents affirm, but from the English ritual, which was in turn originally taken from the Gallic: and the Gallic, as has been shown, has as just a claim to originality, and to a conformity to the apostolic customs, as any that can be pointed to on the page of history. I will not say that the ritual of Methodism is absolutely apostolic; but I do openly declare that, according to all the facts now known, its twofold division is based upon the best instructions of history and of human reason. Its forms are nearly identical, as far as they go, with those of the Church of England. It is a revision and simplification of the English ritual, those parts which can be traced to the earliest antiquity being retained, and those portions evidently borrowed from Rome being eliminated and

per, which is known to have been celebrated every Sunday, and fails to point out the connection between this sacrament and the prayers he mentions as having been *read* by the presiding presbyter or bishop, when both things are clearly enough portrayed by the authorities he cites at the bottom of his page!

Digitized by Google

condemned. Though its authors may not have read, nor even seen, the existing fragments of the old Gallic service, it is a singular fact, corroborative of its apostolic character, that it corresponds very closely to that very ancient ritual, a portion of the formulæ of the two communions being often alike to the smallest sentences and words. It is not only thus pure, ancient, and almost apostolic; but it is brief, simple, and impressive. It gives stability, dignity, strength, and even beauty to the general worship of the denomination; while the extemporaneous portion leaves the most unbounded latitude for the freest expression of the daily religion of the masses of the people; and both together constitute a system, which, as the world knows, has now for almost a century embodied and preserved a living piety, a personal and practical experience, that has performed wonders in melting down and assimilating whole communities and regions to itself, and in spreading the idea of a heartfelt, spiritual, ideal Christianity over and among the nations of the globe.

3. The ritual portion of the worship of Methodism, while cutting off all popish additions and corruptions, is sufficiently full and ample. Our brethren of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, I know, make quite a show of moderation as to the length of their liturgic services, by dwelling upon the extent to which they have gone in abbreviating that of the Church of England. They profess to have taken the *via media*, as they say—the middle path—between Puritanism and the Prayer-book of Charles the Second. But if they will look at the preface to that volume, they will find that this is the very argument it employs itself, in comparing its diminished liturgy with the Roman Breviary. Nay, the Romanist himself takes his turn in boasting of standing on middle ground, when his four duodecimo volumes of services are laid by the side of the twenty-one folio volumes of the oriental worship; and these orientalists themselves have just as good a claim to the

Digitized by Google

via media argument, when their worship of one God and two or three hundred saints is contrasted with the old pagan ritual, which had as many gods to worship, and as many forms of devotion as there were abstract ideas in Europe, and memorable men in Asia, and useful animals and vegetables on the soil of Africa. The Greek Catholic, indeed, does really stand on the middle ground between the ancient pagans and the modern Romans; the Roman occupies the middle ground between the Catholics of Greece and the Church of England; the Church of England holds the middle ground between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant Episcopal denomination of this country; the Protestant Episcopalian, in turn, takes the middle ground between the Church of England and the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States; and this last body, which fairly represents the ideas of universal Methodism, maintains the middle ground between the Protestant Episcopalian and the Puritan. But this middle-ground argument, in whatever hands found, amounts to nothing. Puritanism itself could just as well say that it occupies the *via media* between formal worship and no worship whatsoever. There is no position possible, or conceivable, than which there might not be positions higher and lower, as well as worse and better.

If there is any merit at all, however, in this principle of midway wisdom, it is most justly due to the worship of Methodism, which is not only a compromise but a union and a harmony of the two extremes of extemporaneous and formal worship. It is a compromise and a union of the virtues of both without the extremes of either. It is a compromise and a union in which extemporaneous prayer has the fullest scope to do all it can do under any circumstances, and in which formal prayer has as much license as has been given it by reason, by original custom, or by revelation. It is a compromise and a union according to which the individuals of every congregation have ample room for personal suppli-

Digitized by Google

cation, and by which the congregation itself, in its own individual capacity, has its particular opportunities for devotion. It is a compromise and a union, which, while it maintains the personality, with equal efficiency provides for the unity of all the members of every congregation. But what is best of all, it is a compromise, a union, a harmony, embracing every act of worship ordained by the precepts and example of the Saviour, received and followed by the apostles, as well as perpetuated in the customs of the Church during the age of its uncorrupted purity, simplicity and fervor. It agrees with the primitive Church, not only in retaining the six fundamental exercises of all Christian worship, and in the historic distribution of them into what is extemporaneous and what is formal, but in restricting the formal to those occasions, as well as to those limits, which are sanctioned by everything we know of the Biblical and apostolic practice.

Methodism can say to all the ritualistic denominations without exception: There is nothing in our liturgy that is not found in yours. Protestant Episcopalians, English churchmen, Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, must acknowledge, therefore, that, so far as we have a ritual, that ritual is right. The only complaint from this source must be, then, that Methodism has not *enough* of this sort of worship. To the Puritan, on the other hand, who complains that it has *too much* of it, as all true and heartfelt worship is extemporaneous, Methodism makes answer: As preaching, according to the Scriptures, and according to your own standard writers,[49] is a part of public worship, why do you not make it also extemporaneous? How can your written sermons be

[49] Dr. John Owen (Works, vol. iv. p. 353) enumerates *preaching* among the other parts of public worship. All the Puritan writers do the same; but one authority is quoted for the sake of fastening the argument. After the reading of the Scripture lessons come preaching in all the ancient churches, excepting only that of Rome, where the bishop did not preach till the reign of Leo the First. See Origin. Brit. p. 287.

Digitized by Google

true and heartfelt? Singing, also, is another part of religious worship. Why do you precompose hymns and tunes for common use, instead of letting every man sing extemporaneously, without following any forms of poetry or music? Why halt with your reformation just where you do? Why not carry your principle through to its legitimate results? But if singing precomposed hymns and tunes, and the reading of precomposed discourses, can be true and heartfelt worship, why may not the use of precomposed petitions be equally true and heartfelt? You employ books in singing, because many persons, a whole choir or congregation, are desired to *unite* in this religious service. We employ a book, on certain devotional occasions, for the very same reason. We reject the book in preaching, because only one person speaks, and his free utterance has no need to be restrained. There is such a thing, too, as individual singing, where a person may improvise both his words and notes. But this would be worse than jargon in public worship. Concord in music, and accord in prayer, call alike for written forms; and the one, when intended for that part of religious devotion that is *common* to the congregation, is just as scriptural and rational as the other.

While Methodism is so ample in its ritual, as to embrace every occasion set forth by reason or revelation as calling for precomposition, it guards the limits of that ritual so well, that it is suffered to include not one of even the doubtful additions made by the liturgic denominations. It adopts for its sacramental services only the few simple forms, which, through the English and Gallic rituals, it can clearly trace to the church of the apostles; and it rejects and throws off all the confessions, creeds, and other formularies, which have so long disfigured and rendered unpopular and tedious the services of all Romanizing churches. The confession and absolution of the Church of England, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country, it condemns as a relic of

Digitized by Google

the papal apostasy. The Athanasian Creed it casts off as a specimen of Roman bigotry and intolerance. The Apostle's Creed it expunges, because the retention of it would foster a spirit of pious fraud, as every scholar knows that that instrument was never heard of by the apostles, while the name given it in all prayer-books imposes this deception upon the public. All Saints' days are renounced, the celebration of the birth-day of Jesus himself being not enjoined, not only because the exact date of that event is lost, but because it is known to have been the point of departure from which the whole system of saintly worship took its origin. Methodism has no calendar. No saint, from the days of Stephen to those of Mr. Wesley, who was as good a man as any of the saintly list, is known as such to Methodism. Ask of the best informed Methodist his views of Advent Sundays, of Lent, of Epiphany, of Ascension-day, of Whit-Sunday, of the days Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, of the days of the Purification of Our Lady, of the Annunciation of Our Lady, and of all the similar shadows of popery still clouding the ritual of the European and American Episcopal denominations, and he will frankly tell you that he looks upon them as idle ceremonies, or that he knows and cares nothing at all about them. A sense of God's presence in his heart is so strong within him, and his soul is so brilliant with the light of genuine religion, that all Sundays are to him Advent Sundays, all Fridays are Good Fridays, all days are Ascension-days and Epiphanies, and his recollection of his former life is yet so full of sorrowing regret, that he is ready, on every Wednesday, to sprinkle ashes upon his head, if that were not a mere childish custom, or a dangerous recollection. The whole frame-work of the papal year, still maintained by the Episcopalians of this country and of Europe, he has cast off, demolished, trampled under foot, and finally forgotten. His mind carries nothing in it but the civil year of the country where he lives,

Digitized by Google

which he endeavors to fill up, day by day, as the world turns upon its axis, with a pure and practical devotion proceeding directly from his heart; and this worship, so ample as to cover every hour of his existence, and meet every demand of revelation, is not so redundant, is not so divided into periods, and bears no such nomenclature, that he must be constantly reminded of superstitions which he professedly rejects, but is free from all papal reminiscences and suggestions, and is commemorative of his gratitude, obedience, and love to only God himself.

4. The worship of Methodism is emphatically a free worship, there being no restraints upon its members from a stereotyped liturgy covering the whole body of their devotions, and no restrictions as to age, condition, or sex, from its established customs. With the single exception of the sacraments, which require the fixedness of forms to make them permanent, and the guidance of forms to render their observance in large congregations orderly and harmonious, the utmost latitude is given to all persons feeling the impulses of a heartfelt religion.

In the liturgic denominations, the individual has no choice but to follow the current of formal prayer from the beginning to the end of the common service; no such thing is known among them as individual prayer; the heart of the worshiper may be ever so much burdened with its peculiar sorrows, or ever so jubilant with its particular raptures, but everything personal to him must be subdued; he must smother every emotion arising from his personal experience; and his spirit must flatten down to the dead level of a monotonous ritual, prepared by those who never knew his condition, and which admits of no possible variation.

In the Puritan churches, on the other hand, the worship is free enough as to the opportunities for individual expression, but it has a restriction of another kind, which finds no counterpart in the denominations following forms of prayer.

Digitized by Google

It excludes one-half of every congregation from all active participation in a large portion of the religious services. Among Episcopalians of every order, from Methodism to Romanism, woman enjoys her equal right of joining, and that audibly, in every exercise of the house of God. She may not only sing, but pray, and exhort, according to the customs of her church. The same privilege was granted her in the synagogues, and even in the temple, of the Jews. In them, it is true, a distinct part of the structure was allotted to her use; in the synagogue a low railing, and in the temple a low wall, protected her from the intrusions of promiscuous crowds; in the earliest churches, also, her person was defended from improper contact by similar arrangements; but in all alike, and on every occasion, she enjoyed the utmost liberty of worship, her voice being heard, not only in the songs and psalms of praise, but in prayer and exhortation. The Puritan, however, robs her of these rights. By a misunderstanding and misconstruction of the language of St. Paul upon the behavior appropriate to woman at a particular time and place, which has no reference whatever to the duties of religious worship, the Puritan churches of this country and of England exclude her from the actual praises of God, except as she may join in them by the consent of silence, in listening to the devotions of her imperious lord. The same exclusion of the sex is practiced in all heathen countries, where woman is not suffered to mingle with the male portion of the population, either in the temples, in social life, or even in the domestic circle. In these lands she is regarded as an inferior being, as a slave, as a mere appanage to the estate of manhood, without rights, and without a soul. The Hebrew nation, which received the Old Testament as its constitution and statutory law, released her from this degrading bondage, and the New Testament raised her to an equality with man. Throughout the universal Church of Christ, and in every age, with the

Digitized by Google

single exception of the Puritans and Presbyterians, she has always held the rank of an equal partner with the other sex, and has enjoyed equal rights and privileges in the house of God. Why, then, should the Presbyterians and Puritans reverse the general custom of the Church of God, before and after Christ, and in every land, thrusting woman back again to her condition, so far as religious worship is concerned, not much above her state when she was accounted an inferior being, if not a slave? Simply because, as the Puritans and Presbyterians inform us, a single Apostle, in a single instance, for a singular reason, laid an injunction of silence upon her, not in religious worship, but in respect to some ecclesiastical proceedings touching upon public business: "Let your women," says St. Paul, "keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law; and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Such is the brief and solitary declaration of the Apostle, made to the solitary congregation at Corinth, where the laxity of social intercourse of the sexes had caused the city to be a reproach to human nature over all the world, calling for special vigilance and particular regulations in the assemblies of the Christians, on which the Presbyterians and Puritans base their rule of exclusiveness toward woman, which they would make general and perpetual in the Church of God. There is no good reason for changing what is evidently special into something universal, even if the injunction were plainly a restriction on the freedom of religious worship. But it is not such a restriction. The author of the language quoted had no reference whatever to the services of devotion; for he immediately goes on to say, not that woman must not prophesy or exhort and pray in the meetings of the Church, but that they must not speak in public after the bold and lewd manner of their heathen neighbors:

Digitized by Google

"Every man," says he, "*praying or prophesying* with his head covered, dishonoreth his head; but every woman, that *prayeth or prophesyeth* with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head." Whatever is meant, therefore, by the previous injunction of the Apostle, it did not include *praying or prophesying*, or praying and speaking as the men did in the religious assemblies, for both are here expressly allowed to woman in the very place where the injunction had been applied. The very passage, therefore, which has been so long employed by Puritans and Presbyterians for the exclusion of women from two parts of the religious worship of the Church, is a direct and plain authority for them to speak and pray in public; and yet, this is the only text in revelation from which any one pretends to support the rule forbidding them, while the practice of the universal Church, with the sole exceptions mentioned, is on the side of the equal right of woman to every exercise of devotion.

So singular and exceptional is this rule of exclusiveness, indeed, that those setting it up without authority have never carried it, have never dared to carry it, to its logical results. If women everywhere are forbidden to join audibly in the services of the Church, why do the Presbyterians and Puritans suffer them to sing. Singing is as much a part of the public worship of the house of God as either praying or exhorting. Why admit and even welcome them to one part, and exclude them from the other two? Nay, what is there in the nature of a man, or in the nature of a woman, or in the law of their connection, or in the structure of human society, that makes it reasonable for women to mix in promiscuous gatherings, and to employ freely their faculty of discourse on all manner of topics of conversation, but which does not suffer them to open their mouths, in similar assemblages, on the subject of religion? What is there in religion itself, so peculiar, so remarkable, that a man may talk of it with all freedom to many or to few, in doors or out, but that

Digitized by Google

it may not be mentioned, except in the privacy of her own secret chamber, by her who shares more largely in its present benefits than man, but who has had the misfortune to be born a woman? Does the God of nature, any more than the God of revelation, make any such distinctions, either between the male and the female, or between the fit subjects of their speech, as to include the one and not the other in the right of speaking openly and freely of religion? When a score, or a hundred, or a thousand of both sexes meet, on any social occasion, or for any purpose not professedly religious, the voice of woman is always more than welcome. She talks; she sings; and she is listened to with admiration. She is the aroma, the balm of all the flowers, to every association of the sexes. Her presence is like the presence of an angel; and she renders attractive everything that she is suffered to make her own, or to bring within the limits of her influence. The gift of speech, wherever she is allowed its use, never shows its full perfection, never comes forth with the whole of its expressive sweetness, except when it drops from her soft and mellow lip. In music she is acknowledged to stand preëminent; she takes as her own the leading part; the very soul of the song is hers; her full, clear, joyous voice is heard ringing out the high melody above all the voices; she commands the ear and takes the heart of her rapt audience; and in her victory the art receives the honors of its loftiest triumph. Why may not that voice in speech, as well as that voice in song, with equal propriety be lent to add its attractions to the subject of religion? May not she, who comes nearest to our conceptions of an inhabitant of heaven, freely address her appeals to earth, in behalf of what constitutes the life of the celestials? Does not the theme especially belong to her? Is it not peculiarly her own? And can any one tell why it is, that, in the Puritan and Presbyterian denominations, every social gathering is abundantly attractive, excepting those professedly religious, if

Digitized by Google

the reason is not found in the singular fact, that they nearly exclude from all their religious worship the moving and melting voice of woman?

Whatever may be the responses rendered to these interrogatories by the denominations mentioned, or by the reasonings and customs of any age or people, it is clear enough that Methodism has always had but one rule and one practice in relation to this subject. In the very hour of her origin, and from that day forward, the world has read upon her banner the inscription which a gifted English poetess has unhistorically ascribed to the practice and temper of the Pilgrims—"*freedom to worship God.*" Whatever there is of truth and of good in the recent struggles of society in relation to the rights and wrongs of woman, Methodism stands forth as the mother of the enterprise; for within her inclosure woman was never called to bear a burden not equally borne by the stronger sex; and she has thus not only taken the lead, but set the example, in breaking off the shackles forged by the Puritan and Presbyterian spirit, in redeeming woman from every unjust and narrow custom, and in setting her on a level with her former master. If woman, therefore, does not feel thankful to Methodism, it can only be because she does not understand its history. And Methodism has an equal reason for gratitude to woman. It was the voice of woman that was first of all commissioned to proclaim, even to the apostles, the doctrine and the fact of the resurrection. Woman was called to evangelize the evangelists, to carry the original message to the messengers of our religion, and to be the first preacher of a completed atonement, of a finished salvation, with a particular commission to those, who, by receiving and repeating the fact thus declared, were to overturn the world; and could we now, after the lapse of centuries, during which the pure spirit of Christianity has been more or less obscured by the prejudices of many generations, look right back to that first reunion of the eleven,

Digitized by Google

and of the hundred and twenty disciples still trustful of the truth of their Master's sayings, and see the little assembly, and behold the two Marys rising to their feet, and hear them make the first proclamation of a risen Saviour, and, it may be, hear the sobs and audible thanksgivings of the company, it seems to me that we should have before us the true and authoritative type of such scenes as are now repeated only in the Wesleyan division of the Church of Christ. This type of the worth and work of woman, at all events, has been fully recognized and blessed in the Wesleyan movement, from the day of its origin to the present time. Methodism has made the most of woman in every department of its enterprise; and woman has more than returned the benefit, by lending her nature and her name, her virtues and her voice, to grace the progress of a cause, which was the first, in modern times, to exalt her to the freedom and glory that were shed for her from the uplifting of the cross.[56]

5. It was no less a person than the celebrated Dr. Chalmers, who first pronounced Methodism to be "Christianity in earnest;" and he seems to have obtained this opinion of its character by an attendance upon its worship. Methodism would by no means arrogate this eulogy entirely to itself, as if there were no other earnest Christians in the world; but it certainly is the leading tendency of the system to encourage mankind to make personal religion the chief employment of life, and to worship the universal Father, not with a lifeless formalism, or with an informal lifelessness, but in spirit and

[56] Woman, among the early Christians, had the fullest freedom in the house of worship; and the consequence was, not only that she added vastly to the success of Christianity in those times, but her own character was wonderfully elevated and her genius developed by this equality of right. It is said that Libanius, on seeing the mother of St. Chrysostom, a most noble woman, exclaimed: "What women these Christians have!" The same cause is producing the same effects within the pale of Methodism. See Schaff's Hist. Christ. Church, p. 111.

Digitized by Google

in truth. It receives and represents religion as so essential, so desirable, so beautiful, that any one can afford to make it the central and controlling object of his existence. It accepts the books of revelation as the demonstrated Word of God; it suffers no doubt upon this fundamental truth; and it then receives the several elements of the system of truth therein contained as so many established facts. They are not facts to be made the subject of speculative confidence, as if it should premise, for the sake of an argument, that they are as they have been revealed. They are taken as settled demonstrations, concerning which, as to their being facts, there is no chance for controversy. Wesley did not say: "Grant that I am a sinner; grant that there is a hereafter; grant that my sinfulness, unless removed, may render that future a state of misery; grant that Jesus may have been the Messiah; grant that his death may be my only hope; let me, then, not despise his mercy; let me not utterly disregard his overtures; let me, on the contrary, live as if his system of salvation may turn out to be my only means of safety." No such half-way, luke-warm, compromising language escaped his lips. His words were not words of hypothesis, of doubt, of a lingering disbelief united to a sense of the possibility of his being and acting in mistake. They were altogether on one side of the great question of the necessity of practical religion in order to external life: "I *am* a sinner; I *must* be born again; my present conduct will certainly determine my condition in the future world; there is no salvation from sin, no restoration to holiness, no religion, no heaven, except I find it in Jesus Christ; him have I accepted, and do accept, as my only Saviour; and I know that by him I am now in the possession of eternal life."

This is the Wesleyan mode of receiving and professing Christianity. It is the mode of stating the question of receiving and professing it in public worship. The minister does not say, in his sermon, that the Bible may be true, and,

Digitized by Google

therefore, that every man will find it prudent not to overlook it; he declares the truth of revelation with as much assurance as he would the deductions of mathematics; he believes fully, to the utmost, every word it utters; he holds his audience before him, not as if they were listening to human speculations, but as if they were giving ear to the very accents of God himself; his appeals descend upon them as if he beheld himself standing on the brink of eternity, whence he looked down into the final habitations of the lost, and upward, full and clear, upon the glories of the heavenly land; he speaks from the most absolute belief, and from that internal experience, which amounts to knowledge; he tells his hearers that he knows revelation to be a reality, and the religion it reveals to be a truth, because he carries the evidence, the proof, the conclusion, within his heart; that same consciousness, by which he determines whether he loves or hates a human being—his neighbor, his parent, or his child—causes him to know that he does not hate, but loves, his God, his Redeemer, and the members of the Church; he not only knows, in this way, that he has himself passed from death to life, but holds in his hand the key of universal knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom and of the things of God; and from this experimental, heartfelt, conscious certainty springs that marked earnestness of speech, by which he is everywhere distinguished from all other clergymen, whenever he addresses the people, or calls upon the universal Father, in the house of prayer.

But he finds the membership before him as warm in their devotions as himself. They, too, have accepted the Bible as the ultimatum of the revelation, and of all probable revelations, of God to man. They look for nothing further; they want nothing more; and they receive what is given without a doubt. They have been taught to believe, and they do believe, that personal religion is the one thing needful for this world and for that which is to come; that there is no

Digitized by Google

way of obtaining and preserving it but by giving their souls entirely to it; and that they might better suffer the loss of everything dear in life, and fall upon nothing but misfortunes and afflictions for their few years here, than to fail of "working out their salvation," and "making their calling and election sure" for the eternal state. And yet, they renounce nothing there is in the world but sin. They seek nothing in the world but purity of heart and life. All that lies between these two extremes—all that can come to them of real happiness from the physical, intellectual, and social world—every good gift that can reach them from the kingdoms of creation, providence and grace—everything beautiful, true, and good—they regard as the rightful property of the follower of Christ. All that lies outside of these extremes—all forms of folly and of sin—they consider as of no value to the soul. They consider them as entirely detrimental to its happiness. In renouncing the world, therefore, they do it heartily, as they think they are suffering no loss of anything that could, by any possibility, have done them any good. In accepting the Christian character, they retain everything, as they think, that the natural man himself could really have enjoyed, while they make a conscious addition of what is ever after a well-spring of real heartfelt comfort, which the world can neither give nor take away. They think they know, too, by the evidence of their own consciousness applied to the proofs furnished in the Word of God, and by the witness of the Spirit, that they have made this renunciation of sin, that they have accepted this heaven-born character, that they have thus advanced from the empire of death to the possession of everlasting life. So deep, so vivid, so real is this work of God within them, that they never speak of their state in Christ as something which they *hope*, but as a settled reality which they have been made to *know*. They declare, in the words of scripture, that they "*know* in whom they have believed;" that they "*know* they have passed from

Digitized by Google

death to life;" and that it has been given them "to *know* the mysteries of the kingdom" into which they have been introduced. They therefore receive the word spoken to them from the pulpit, with an apetite, with a zest, unknown to a doubting, feeble, and sickly faith. They enter the house of God, and engage in all its services, not like philosophers whose business is to inquire and deny, but like men of science, who treat facts as facts, and act accordingly. They mean precisely what they say and do; they are in earnest; and their earnestness is not a mere fashion fallen into by the fathers of Methodism, and handed down by example from generation to generation. The cause which produced it in Wesley, produced it in all his followers; the same cause still acts from the center to the circumference of the great and growing movement; and that cause is the internal demonstration of the reality of the teachings of revelation which every true member of the denomination carries in the deepest recesses of his heart. Satisfied beyond a scruple of the doctrines of the sinless creation, of the fall of the race, of the sacrifice for sin, of the universal atonement, of the necessity of personal coöperation in order to salvation, of the exact correspondence of our future condition of joy or woe with the decision and character of the present world, and of the brevity and uncertainty of the space given us for the accomplishment of ends of such dread concern, they cannot enter upon the services of religion as Christians of weaker faith, of less thorough experience, may do, but must speak and act with earnestness and ardor corresponding to what they know and feel.

But the marked earnestness of Methodism is not denied; its worship has been regarded as lying more open to the charge of extravagance; but the extravagance of any one's conduct, or proceedings, is a question that must be settled by comparing his acts with the motives he has to prompt him to greater or less exertions. A man flying from a falling

Digitized by Google

edifice, or escaping from any evil, will exert himself in proportion to his sense of the imminence and amount of the threatened danger. So a person in the pursuit of a certain good, or in the act of retaining what he has, will show by his vigor the estimate he sets upon it. This is as true of our conduct in relation to religion, as to any other thing; and it must be the logical conclusion, that, as a general statement, men who have the practical experience of Christianity will give an outward expression of it, in worship, in proportion to its extent and strength. The first fervors of a man newly brought into the possession of personal religion, and the first fervors of a new religious movement, will often transgress the limits of moderation, and sometimes of every rule of taste; but in the end these improprieties correct themselves. Not only Methodism, but nearly every modern denomination, began under great excitement, which led to certain excesses not now known among them. The reader will recollect the extravagances of not a few of the reformers, including such men as Calvin, and Zuinglius, and even Luther, which passed away with the lapse of time. He will recollect the Anabaptists of Upper Germany, who, in the second stage of the Reformation, were a new people of a most wild and fanatical disposition, so charged with a sense of the reality of revelation as to undertake to disseminate its doctrines by the sword, but who have since settled down into a family of the most quiet, and orderly, and respectable denominations in the world. He will recollect the rant and bombast, the irrational and reckless zeal, of the earliest Puritans of England, who, like the exiled Cox at Frankfort, were ready to rend the world for a mere question about a prayer-book. He will recollect the character of the early followers of Robert Brown, a later Puritan, and the founder of Congregationalism, whom the great historian of the Church pronounces "a hot-headed innovator," whose sect is declared, by the same author, to have started out "with notions crude

Digitized by Google

and chimerical," which "they maintained and propagated" with "a zeal intemperate and extravagant in the highest degree," but who have since become, in old England, and in New England, remarkable for their sobriety and decency in all matters pertaining to religion.[81] The truth is, nearly every existing denomination that sprung out of the Roman Church has been marked by these excesses; but the real worth of a religious idea is never to be determined by a too rigid criticism of the outward demonstrations of its original asserters and defenders. A youthful society, like a young man, or a new-born Christian, is very apt to overdo itself; and it is a fundamental principle, also, that the greater the idea, and the deeper its impression, the more exuberant will be the zeal and energy of its adherents. This is the principle that excuses Zuinglius for drawing the sword in defense of the doctrines of the Reformation among the Swiss; that excuses Calvin, as far as he can be excused, for his cruelties upon Servetus; that excuses the latest of the Puritans, who, after suffering exile from England for the cause of religious liberty—"freedom to worship God"—denied that freedom to everybody but themselves, who burnt the witches, bored the ears of the Quakers, and banished the Baptists of Massachusetts, and who did their utmost to shut New England against the missionaries of our own denomination. It is this principle that excuses the excesses of the current reformation among the Presbyterians and Episcopalians of Ireland, where every demonstration of the Wesleyan revival has been recently reënacted.

It is this same philosophy, indeed, that excuses the contradictions of early Methodism, which, though brought into existence beneath the academic shades of the profoundest and dullest of the British universities, and at once drawing to itself some of the deepest and calmest men in England,

[81] Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., vol. ii., part ii., sec. 3, pp. 116–117.

Digitized by Google

and all through its history producing a lineage of the same class of minds, of which Adam Clarke and Stephen Olin may be taken as representatives for the opposite sides of the Atlantic, did, as its truest friends are the most ready to admit, like the other sects, run into certain extravagances, particularly in their social worship, which every one of her most distinguished sons, from Wesley to the present day, has most sincerely and heartily condemned; but time, which has done so much in subduing the wild temper of other religious bodies, has at last removed, in nearly every part of the world, these abuses from our own; and the Wesleyan idea of a true and spiritual worship, which has been shown to have been derived to it through the oldest rituals from the apostolic times, and which is but a reproduction of the ideal of the original worship of Christianity, in which liberty and form, individuality and union, variety and stability are united, is at this moment making its impression and effecting its conquests in every quarter of the globe. Methodism, in her true character, would have all her children worship God as Moses did, when, with familiarity mixed with fear, he took the sandals from his feet, and came close but with awe and trembling to the burning bush; it would give a personality to each and a unity to all of her adherents; and it is by this freedom of individual devotion, and this harmony and dignity of her common worship, with their pervading earnestness of spirit and strength of purpose, that she has accomplished so much in her former history, and hopes so largely for the centuries yet to come.

We have beheld what was included in the simple daily ritual of the common mother of all religious denominations. We have followed the enlargements and corruptions of that ritual in the ante-Roman, Roman and Greek establishments. We have traced the origin of the Gallic, English, and Methodistic liturgies. Let us now look for a moment on a full day of Wesleyan worship, on one of its carnival occa-

Digitized by Google

sions, when the length and breadth of its system may be witnessed. Let it be such a Sabbath as occurs once a quarter in every Wesleyan congregation. The service opens with a preparatory assemblage of all the members of the church within a given parish, in the capacity of what is called a general class, where every person, male and female, from the minister to the youngest member, is expected to rise up and give a public statement of the present condition of the work of God upon his heart. This is followed by another gathering of the members of the church and parish, generally on the Saturday afternoon, to listen to a discourse intended to deepen the conviction of the indispensableness of personal piety as a preparation for usefulness in this world and of happiness in the world to come; and this discourse, which is delivered by a traveling and presiding presbyter, is accompanied by the usual services of prayer, singing, reading the Scriptures, and exhortation. Then succeeds a meeting, introduced by religious worship, wherein the church meets by its constitutional representatives to look over and examine the spiritual condition of its members, and to attend to questions pertaining to its perpetuity, extension, and support. A general prayer-meeting follows, held in the evening, at which the church and parish are invited to be present, the object of which is to call for the Spirit of God to descend upon the people, that their personal piety may be maintained, replenished, and diffused throughout the parish. The morning of the Sabbath-day itself is usually ushered in by the celebration of that ancient rite of the Agape, or Love-Feast, which the Apostle denominates the Feast of Charity, when all those professing religion assemble to manifest their union by partaking together of a little bread and water, and thus to symbolize the acknowledged central principle of their system, which has been seen to be nothing less than universal love.[62]

[62] The early love-feasts are described by Justin Martyr and by Tertullian (Apol. c. 29) as feasts held in the houses of worship just before the

Digitized by Google

Next comes the regular hour of public worship, when the officiating clergyman ascends the pulpit, and leads all the devotions of the congregation. He reads portions of the Scriptures, by him selected for the day, and suited to the occasion, to which the people devoutly listen. He engages in fervent extemporaneous prayer, calling for the power of God to be made manifest in the hearts of his children, and among the entire assembly, and to maintain and propagate the cause of practical religion in the surrounding community, the people following him closely in their thoughts, and every now and then assenting to his petition by audible responses, such as have always been common among Episcopalians of every order. He addresses to the congregation an extemporaneous discourse, which characteristically turns upon some topic of practical religion, and comes from the abundance of a heart conscious of an inward work of regeneration and of the experience of universal love, replete with proofs of the possibility and power of this interior life, and closing with an appeal in behalf of a personal attention to the means of salvation, which the most hardened of an audience find it difficult to resist. He reads hymns, both before and after the discourse, requesting not only a select number of practiced singers, but the whole assembly, to unite in the beautiful and spiritual service of praising God, and of harmonizing and exalting their own spirits, by the sweet influences of poetry and music. Then, after a period of rest and separa-

administration of the Supper. They are now held in the same way, and on the same occasion, by the Methodists. "These simple repasts," says a writer in the Christian Examiner (vol. xxxvii. p. 365) "were called among the early Christians *agapæ*, or feasts of love, in token of the affection Christians bore to each other. In these feasts all differences of earthly condition were forgotten. Rich and poor, high and low, *masters and servants*, met together on a level, for in Christ there was no distinction founded on earthly condition, but all were one in him." Could any one better state the conception of a modern Methodist love-feast? So thorough was Wesley in his work of recovering the full ideal of original Christianity;

Digitized by Google

tion for the purposes of physical refreshment, the congregation again assembles, in the afternoon, to celebrate that portion of their public worship which is common, and which is regulated by established forms. On entering the house, the worshiper beholds within the railing about the pulpit a table, and on the table a vessel of water, and the communion plate of that particular society, over which loosely hangs a white linen covering. The water is there to be used in administering baptism to those who may choose to receive it by the mode of sprinkling, those not satisfied with this form having been previously baptized by pouring, or by immersion, as Methodism has established a rule, that every member of its body must have renounced the world and professed regeneration by the acceptance of this sacrament, but that the utmost liberty of opinion shall be granted in relation to the manner of receiving it. If there are children to be baptized, the clergyman begins the rite by an exhortation to the people that they join in prayer for the salvation of the candidates; then follows a common prayer, the minister reading it aloud, and the people responding to its several parts; then a collect taken from the tenth chapter of Mark is read by the minister; then the candidates are sprinkled, poured, or immersed, as the parents or guardians may have desired, the name of each being uttered distinctly before the water is applied; and the service is then closed by the use of the Lord's Prayer, in which the congregation unites, after which the clergyman is at liberty to add an extemporaneous petition adapted to any particular fact or feature of the occasion. In the baptism of adult persons, the rite opens with an exhortation to pray for the candidates, after which the congregation unite in a common prayer read by the minister, and responded to by the people at proper periods; then follows a collect taken from the third chapter of John; the minister then addresses an exhortation to the candidates, and asks of them if they renounce the world and accept of Christ in

Digitized by Google

that ancient form falsely denominated the apostles' creed, but without the mention of this spurious name; another common prayer is then read and responded to by the congregation; the rite is then administered; and the whole ceremony is concluded, as before, by the Lord's Prayer, to which the clergyman may add whatever extemporary supplications he may think required by any peculiarity in the candidates, in their circumstances, or in the occasion of their thus uniting with the followers of Christ.[52]

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper immediately succeeds the rite of baptism. It is introduced by the reading of certain sentences of Scripture, inciting the congregation to works of charity and mercy, during which the people throw in their free-will offerings for the poor and needy. Then follow prayer and collects, which are doubtless as ancient as the first diffusion of Christianity over the south of Europe. The prayer of consecration is very similar to the one still extant from the old Gallic ritual. In the distribution of the elements, forms are used which can be traced to the first ages of the Church; and the communicants at the same time unite in a sacramental song particularly expressive of their indebtedness to the sacrificial death of Jesus for the work of God which they are conscious has been wrought

[52] There can be no objection to the use of the apostles' creed if the deceptive title be left off; for it is known to have been in use in the Christian Church from a remote antiquity; and there are some writers, such as the principal Latin and Greek fathers, Calvin, Luther, Beza, Peter Martyr, and Bullinger, who affirm it to be as ancient as the apostolic age; but the most learned of the English divines, among whom Bps. Pearson and Burnet may be mentioned, give up the claim of its apostolic origin. See Bp. Pearson on the Creed and Bp. Burnet on the VIIIth Article. There is no period of church history when this form was not entitled the "*Fides Apostolica*;" and it is this cognomen which has deceived so many of the learned; but the true and obvious translation of the title is, not apostles' creed, but the *apostolic creed*, which signifies simply, that it is apostolic in its character—a fact singularly overlooked by scholars of the utmost repute.

Digitized by Google

within them. The service is closed with the Lord's Prayer, repeated in concert by minister and members, and by other forms of prayer of great antiquity, as well as by extemporaneous petitions adapted to the circumstances of time, place, and people.[64]

The evening of the day is devoted to a general meeting, in which the minister makes a fervent exhortation to the church and congregation, either with or without a text; and he is followed by the more active members, male and female, who give God thanks for the work which they feel within them, and stir each other up, by mutual exhortations and prayer, to those labors which proceed from the living principle of universal love. Not only in these concluding exercises, but in those of the whole day, from morning till night, the central idea of everything said and done is, that the one thing needful in this present life is that personal,

[64] The Gallic prayer of consecration, translated from Mabillon's edition of the manuscript found in the queen of Sweden's library, as ancient as any known, and from which the English and Methodist consecrating prayer was taken, is so similar to the existing form now used, not only in the Church of England, but in the Episcopal and Methodist denominations of this country, that the reader will be struck with the close resemblance: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, in that night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, he blessed and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, take and eat: this is my body which shall be delivered for you. Do this, as oft as ye eat it, in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup, after he had supped, saying, this is the cup of the New Testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shall show the Lord's death, till he shall come in the brightness of the heavens. Amen." This is the central portion of the prayer; these are the words employed in the old English and Gallic liturgies from the earliest antiquity; and it is noticeable, at least, that they are nearly the same terms as are still repeated by the officiating minister, wherever Methodism has an established congregation. See Dr. Brett's Collection and the 63d of the Oxford Tracts, vol. i., p. 446.

Digitized by Google

heartfelt, vital experience of religion, whose inner soul and outward expression are love toward God and our fellow-man. To this point everything is made to tend. This is the theme of the morning love-feast. It is the end and object of the sermon. The prayers and songs of the public worship center upon the same conclusion. The minister and the people make it the topic of their exhortations. Even the sacraments are so administered, so shaped by the extempore remarks and supplications, as to cause every heart to feel that nothing can take the place of vital piety. Every part of every service presses the hearer and the worshiper along in this one direction; the warmth of interest, the strength of feeling, the power of this one purpose are so marked, and so irresistible, that the whole body of the congregation is moved along, till every individual is actuated by the common sentiment. There is no lifeless sitting and listening to the service. All is real, vital, powerful, impressive; every person feels himself to be, not a spectator, but an actor; every one recognizes within the form the pervading power of original Christianity; and the glow of the common experience is so intense, that, sooner or later, it melts and assimilates the whole mass of the worshiping assembly to itself. It presses itself beyond the limits of the ordinary audience. It fills the parish; it throws its light and heat upon the surrounding population. Full of the living spirit of the doctrine, and controlled by the order of its discipline, the worship of Methodism, in which the principles and virtues of the whole system are included, has ever been and ever will be, so long as the life of religion is embodied in it, the active agency in the progress of her victories and in the succession of her triumphs. The doctrine is right; the system of propagating that doctrine is efficient; but, as the enterprise is aimed at the heart, and only through the heart to the entire nature and composition of the race, the doctrine and the discipline had to reach a

Digitized by Google

result, and maintain it too, which, as the common status of its worship, possesses the earnestness, the fervor, the living and animating power, which causes the Wesleyan movement to be a burning and a quenchless fire among the cooler religions and torpid populations of the world.

And here, reader, I have reached the natural conclusion of my subject. We have walked together over a wide area and run our vision over a great variety of objects. But we have had around us, nevertheless, only one general landscape. We have been trying to determine, by submitting the facts of the case to a philosophical examination, the problem contained in the remarkable success of Methodism. We have seen how John Wesley, by the work of regeneration, by an experience of a heartfelt religion, by the possession, profession and practice of primitive Christianity, became the first Methodist. We have seen how his father's family were successively converted to his views and made partakers of his piety. We have seen the respectability, the genius, the position, the influence of this first Methodist family. We have seen the gradual expansion of the indwelling and plastic principle of practical religion, in England, in the United States, in the leading countries of Europe, on the degraded soil of Africa, along the shores and larger streams of Asia, and among the islands of all the seas and oceans of the globe. We have seen, particularly in England and in the United States, the religious, literary and social power of this great movement, and what are the signs of its social, literary and religious future. The problem being thus before us, we have seen what opposite opinions have been and are yet entertained about it, and what judgments have been put on record by representative men, from the day of its origin. Passing from this general statement of the question, and from these outside solutions of the mystery of the wonderful growth of Methodism, we have wrought out the natural as well as historical development of its germinating principle, and beheld

Digitized by Google

this principle expand into a doctrine, discipline and worship, which together give to the world the truest existing exhibition of ideal Christianity. We have found Methodism to be, not a system of opinions and practices gradually built up by adding one thing after another to a small and unintelligent beginning, as some writers have superficially imagined, but a legitimate and natural growth from a solitary point—the necessity and possibility of personal religion—which, as a germ, contained everything since coming from it. We have thus studied the theory of the Wesleyan organization, till we have found its fundamental idea, its central force, from which everything that it is, and everything it has accomplished, has been evolved. Within this central idea, this primary and propelling force, we have discovered the origin and measure of its own existence, and the law of its success. Methodism as an idea, Methodism as a movement, Methodism as a system, is nothing but the personal religion of its founder multiplied into the numerous multitude of his adherents, who, in whatsoever they are as a body of men, and in everything they have undertaken and performed, have been molded, governed and propelled by this common and all-controlling force. Methodism has greatly expanded, and has accomplished great results, simply because the power that created it, the power that pushed it forward, the power that has kept it ever youthful, ever vigorous, ever active, is also great. So irresistible has been this interior power, that its natural development has been easy and unrestrained by outward obstacles, its form and features, its institutions and customs, its attempts and triumphs, having sprung out of it as naturally as branches shoot from the parent stock, and not been accumulated and added to it by the fortunate use of happy accidents. It has been said, I know, that Methodism is the child of Providence. So is everything a child of Providence. But this is a very superficial way of speaking. Methodism is an Idea; this idea is a Life; this life has created to itself

Digitized by Google

a Body, whose dimensions, activities, laws, habits, and successes are the product of this indwelling and mighty soul; and the reason why the system thus generated is so identical with the system of primitive Christianity, and has outdone the achievements of the original Church of Christ, is not because Wesley was a man learned in ancient history, and labored to conform his movement to the apostolic model, but because the same principle will always produce similar results, in spite of any amount of difference in surrounding circumstances. This idea, this life, this soul will go on growing, progressing, and conquering, so long as it is left free to expand and work according to the law of its own existence, and not cramped and restrained by heterogeneous additions and alterations. The best thing that its friends can do for it is to drink in, more and more, of its animating spirit, and then give that spirit the freest use of whatever they are or happen to possess. Having sprung from a heavenly origin, it needs no grafting of the scions of other systems upon itself. We have only to take care of it and let it grow. This was the policy of its founder. This was the policy of his immediate successors. This, in general, has been the policy and practice of its keepers for the past and passing generations. We of this day, and our representatives for all future time, have only to imitate the wisdom of our fathers, to submit to be guided by this creative principle, not to tamper too much with training it. Just as it has grown, so it will continue to expand; it is a kernel of God's own planting; and it is destined to become, if thus treated, a tree of life for the healing of the people of many nations!

THE END.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

3 2044 023 286 024

FEB 0 9 1994

Digitized by Google